This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

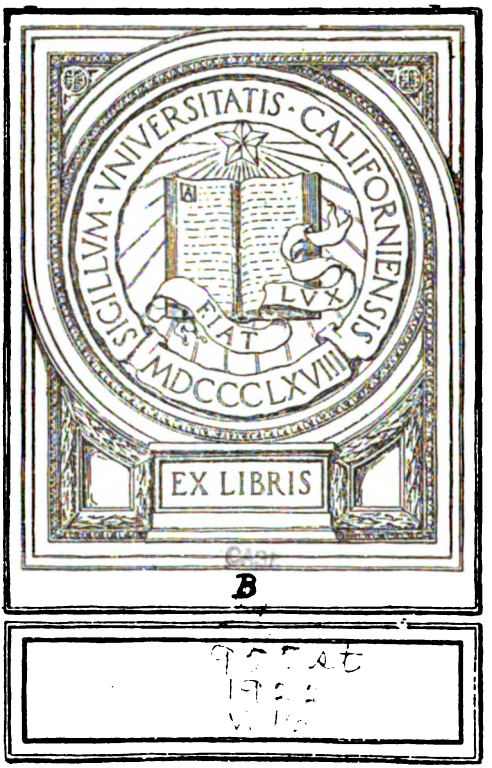
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE WORKS OF
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
VAILIMA EDITION

THIS EDITION, PRINTED FROM TYPE WHICH HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED, IS STRICTLY LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND AND SIXTY SETS, OF WHICH ONE THOUSAND ARE FOR SALE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND SIXTY ARE FOR PRESENTATION.

THIS IS NO.

350

THE EDITION FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS LIMITED TO ONE THOUSAND AND THIRTY SETS, OF WHICH ONE THOUSAND ARE FOR SALE AND THIRTY ARE FOR PRESENTATION.

Digitized by Google

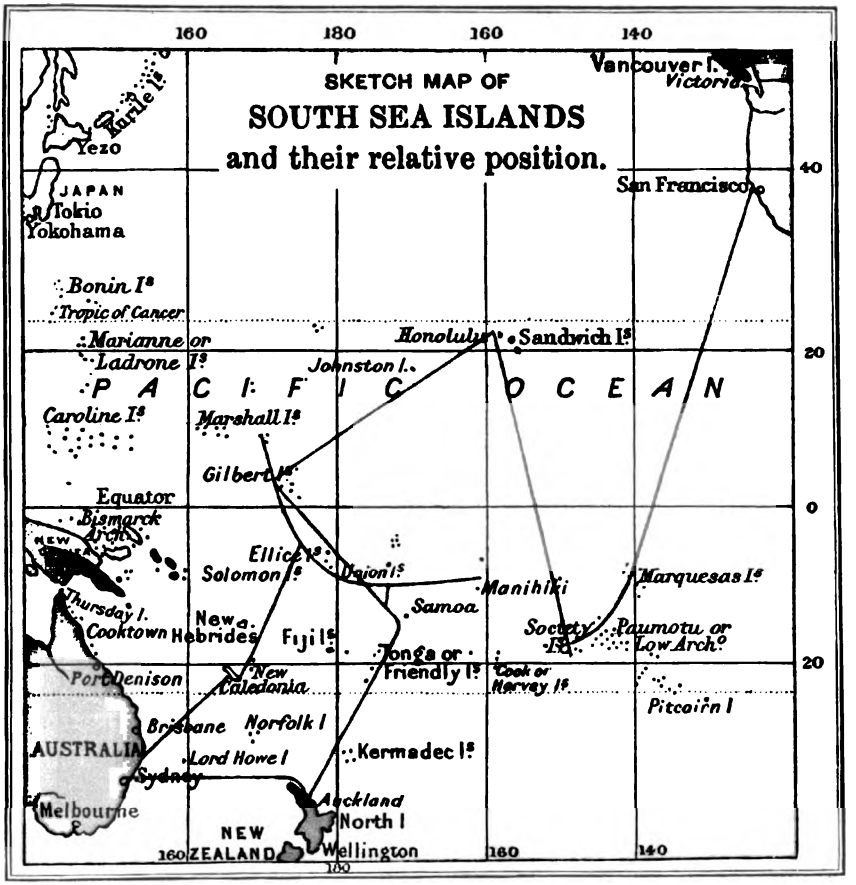
THE WORKS OF
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
VAILIMA EDITION
VOLUME XVI

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Univ. of
California

Digitized by Google


SKETCH MAP OF
SOUTH SEA ISLANDS
and their relative position.
160
180
160
140
40
20
0
20
Vancouver I.
Victoria
San Francisco
Kurile Is
Yezo
JAPAN
Tokio
Yokohama
Bonin Is
Tropic of Cancer
Marianne or Ladrone Is
Honolulu
Sandwich Is
Johnston I.
P A C I F I C O C E A N
Caroline Is
Marshall Is
Gilbert Is
Equator
Bismarck Arch.
NEW GUINEA
Ellice Is
Solomon Is
Union Is
Manihiki
Marquesas Is
Samoa
Thursday I.
Cooktown
New Hebrides
Fiji Is
Society Is
Paumotu or Low Arch.
Port Denison
New Caledonia
Tonga or Friendly Is
Cook or Harvey Is
Pitcairn I
Brisbane
Norfolk I
AUSTRALIA
Lord Howe I
Kermadec Is
Sydney
Auckland
North I
Melbourne
NEW ZEALAND
Wellington
160
180
160
140

THE WRONG BOX

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM HEINEMANN
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CASSELL AND COMPANY LIMITED: AND
LONGMANS, GREEN AND COMPANY,
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

IN THE SOUTH SEAS
A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

LONDON
PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM HEINEMANN
IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHATTO AND WINDUS:
CASSELL AND COMPANY LIMITED: AND
LONGMANS, GREEN AND COMPANY.
NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
MCMXXII

Digitized by Google

Copyright, 1905, 1913, 1922, by
Charles Scribner's Sons

Printed at the Country Life Press
Garden City, New York, U. S. A.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

VOLUME XVI

	PAGE
IN THE SOUTH SEAS	1
A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY	445

501027

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

IN THE SOUTH SEAS

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF EXPERIENCES AND OBSERVATIONS IN THE MARQUESAS, PAUMOTUS, AND GILBERT ISLANDS IN THE COURSE OF TWO CRUISES, ON THE YACHT "CASCO" (1888) AND THE SCHOONER "EQUATOR" (1889)

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE following chapters are here printed in book form for the first time. They are selected from a series which was first published partially in *Black and White* (February to December, 1891), and fully in the New York *Sun* during the same period.

The voyages which supplied the occasion and the material for the work were three in number, viz.: one of seven months (June, 1888, to January, 1889), in the yacht *Casco*, from San Francisco to the Marquesas, the Paumotus, Tahiti, and thence northwards to Hawaii; a second (June to December, 1889), in the trading schooner *Equator*, from Honolulu, the Hawaiian capital (where the author had stayed in the interval), to the Gilberts and thence to Samoa; and a third (April to September, 1890), in the trading steamer, *Janet Nicoll*, which set out from Sydney and followed a very devious course, extending as far as from Penrhyn in the Eastern to the Marshall Islands in the Western Pacific. The course of these several voyages can easily be traced on the map which serves as frontispiece to this volume, where each is marked by a different kind of red line.

Digitized by Google

EDITORIAL NOTE

Before setting out on his Pacific travels, the author had contracted to write an account of them in the form of letters for serial publication. The plan by and by changed in his mind into that of a book partly of travel and partly of research, which should combine the results of much careful observation and inquiry upon matters of island history, custom, belief, and tradition, with some account of his own experiences and those of his travelling companions. Under the nominal title of *Letters* he began to compose the chapters of such a book on board the *Janet Nicoll*, and continued the task during the first ten months of his residence in Samoa (October, 1890, to July, 1891). These chapters were sent home in fulfilment of his promise; but before the serial publication had gone very far, he realised that the personal and the impersonal elements were not very successfully combined nor in proportions that contented his readers. Accordingly he abandoned for the time being the idea of republishing the chapters in book form; but when the scheme of the Edinburgh Edition was maturing, he desired that a selection should be made from them, and should appear as volume xx. of that edition. That desire was carried out.

It must be understood that a considerable portion of the author's voyages above mentioned is not recorded at all in the following pages. Of one of its most attractive episodes, the visit to Tahiti, no account was written; while of his experiences in Hawaii

Digitized by Google

he only narrated a visit to the Kona coast and to the leper settlement at Molokai. These chapters did not come out at all to his own satisfaction, and have accordingly been omitted. So have some others describing a visit to Penrhyn in the course of his third voyage.

Of the four sections here given, each is complete in itself. The first deals with the Marquesas (the scene of Herman Melville's *Typee*), the second with the Paumotus—the former a volcanic and mountainous group, the latter a group of atolls or low coral islands, both in the Eastern Pacific, and both under the protectorate of France. The last two sections describe the author's residence in the Gilberts, a remote and little known coral group in the Western Pacific, which at the time of his visit was under independent native government, but has since been annexed by Great Britain. This is the part of his work with which the author was himself best satisfied, and it derives additional interest from describing a state of manners and government which has now passed away.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

PART I: THE MARQUESAS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	AN ISLAND LANDFALL	13
II.	MAKING FRIENDS	23
III.	THE MAROON	35
IV.	DEATH	45
V.	DEPOPULATION	56
VI.	CHIEFS AND TAPUS	68
VII.	HATIHEU	80
VIII.	THE PORT OF ENTRY	91
IX.	THE HOUSE OF TEMOANA	102
X.	A PORTRAIT AND A STORY	114
XI.	LONG-PIG—A CANNIBAL HIGH PLACE	125
XII.	THE STORY OF A PLANTATION	140
XIII.	CHARACTERS	154
XIV.	IN A CANNIBAL VALLEY	164
XV.	THE TWO CHIEFS OF ATUONA	174

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

PART II: THE PAUMOTUS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE DANGEROUS ARCHIPELAGO—ATOLLS AT A DISTANCE . . .	189
II.	FAKARAVA: AN ATOLL AT HAND .	200
III.	A HOUSE TO LET IN A LOW ISLAND	213
IV.	TRAITS AND SECTS IN THE PAUMOTUS	225
V.	A PAUMOTUAN FUNERAL . . .	239
VI.	GRAVEYARD STORIES.	246

PART III: THE GILBERTS

I.	BUTARITARI	269
II.	THE FOUR BROTHERS	278
III.	AROUND OUR HOUSE	289
IV.	A TALE OF A TAPU	302
V.	A TALE OF A TAPU (*Continued*). .	313
VI.	THE FIVE DAYS' FESTIVAL . . .	327
VII.	HUSBAND AND WIFE	345

PART IV: THE GILBERTS

I.	THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE ROYAL TRADER.	359
II.	THE KING OF APEMAMA: FOUNDATION OF EQUATOR TOWN . . .	371
III.	THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE PALACE OF MANY WOMEN . .	383

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
IV.	The King of Apemama: Equator Town and the Palace . . .	393
V.	King and Commons	404
VI.	The King of Apemama: Devil-Work	417
VII.	The King of Apemama	435

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PART I

THE MARQUESAS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I

AN ISLAND LANDFALL

FOR nearly ten years my health had been declining; and for some while before I set forth upon my voyage, I believed I was come to the afterpiece of life, and had only the nurse and undertaker to expect. It was suggested that I should try the South Seas; and I was not unwilling to visit like a ghost, and be carried like a bale, among scenes that had attracted me in youth and health. I chartered accordingly Dr. Merrit's schooner yacht, the *Casco*, seventy-four tons register; sailed from San Francisco towards the end of June, 1888, visited the Eastern islands, and was left early the next year at Honolulu. Hence, lacking courage to return to my old life of the house and sick-room, I set forth to leeward in a trading schooner, the *Equator*, of a little over seventy tons, spent four months among the atolls (low coral islands) of the Gilbert group, and reached Samoa towards the close of '89. By that time gratitude and habit were be-

Digitized by Google

ginning to attach me to the islands; I had gained a competency of strength; I had made friends; I had learned new interests; the time of my voyages had passed like days in fairyland; and I decided to remain. I began to prepare these pages at sea, on a third cruise, in the trading steamer, *Janet Nicoll*. If more days are granted me, they shall be passed where I have found life most pleasant and man most interesting; the axes of my black boys are already clearing the foundations of my future house; and I must learn to address readers from the uttermost parts of the sea.

That I should thus have reversed the verdict of Lord Tennyson's hero is less eccentric than appears. Few men who come to the islands leave them; they grow grey where they alighted; the palm shades and the trade-wind fans them till they die, perhaps cherishing to the last the fancy of a visit home, which is rarely made, more rarely enjoyed, and yet more rarely repeated. No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor, and the task before me is to communicate to fireside travellers some sense of its seduction, and to describe the life, at sea and ashore, of many hundred thousand persons, some of our own blood and language, all our contemporaries, and yet as remote in thought and habit as Rob Roy or Barbarossa, the Apostles or the Cæsars.

The first experience can never be repeated.

Digitized by Google

The first love, the first sunrise, the first South Sea Island, are memories apart, and touched a virginity of sense. On the 28th of July, 1888, the moon was an hour down by four in the morning. In the east a radiating centre of brightness told of the day; and beneath, on the skyline, the morning bank was already building, black as ink. We have all read of the swiftness of the day's coming and departure in low latitudes; it is a point on which the scientific and sentimental tourist are at one, and has inspired some tasteful poetry. The period certainly varies with the season; but here is one case exactly noted. Although the dawn was thus preparing by four, the sun was not up till six; and it was half-past five before we could distinguish our expected islands from the clouds on the horizon. Eight degrees south, and the day two hours a-coming. The interval was passed on deck in the silence of expectation, the customary thrill of landfall heightened by the strangeness of the shores that were then approaching. Slowly they took shape in the attenuating darkness. Ua-huna, piling up to a truncated summit, appeared the first upon the starboard bow; almost abeam arose our destination, Nuka-hiva, whelmed in cloud; and betwixt and to the southward, the first rays of the sun displayed the needles of Ua-pu. These pricked about the line of the horizon; like the pinnacles of some ornate and monstrous church, they stood there, in the sparkling bright-

Digitized by Google

ness of the morning, the fit sign-board of a world of wonders.

Not one soul aboard the *Casco* had set foot upon the islands, or knew, except by accident, one word of any of the island tongues; and it was with something perhaps of the same anxious pleasure as thrilled the bosom of discoverers that we drew near these problematic shores. The land heaved up in peaks and rising vales; it fell in cliffs and buttresses; its colour ran through fifty modulations in a scale of pearl and rose and olive; and it was crowned above by opalescent clouds. The suffusion of vague hues deceived the eye; the shadows of clouds were confounded with the articulations of the mountain; and the isle and its unsubstantial canopy rose and shimmered before us like a single mass. There was no beacon, no smoke of towns to be expected, no plying pilot. Somewhere, in that pale phantasmagoria of cliff and cloud, our haven lay concealed; and somewhere to the east of it —the only sea-mark given—a certain headland, known indifferently as Cape Adam and Eve, or Cape Jack and Jane, and distinguished by two colossal figures, the gross statuary of nature. These we were to find; for these we craned and stared, focussed glasses, and wrangled over charts; and the sun was overhead and the land close ahead before we found them. To a ship approaching, like the *Casco*, from the north, they proved indeed the least conspicuous fea-

Digitized by Google

tures of a striking coast; the surf flying high above its base; strange, austere, and feathered mountains rising behind; and Jack and Jane, or Adam and Eve, impending like a pair of warts above the breakers.

Thence we bore away along shore. On our port beam we might hear the explosions of the surf; a few birds flew fishing under the prow; there was no other sound or mark of life, whether of man or beast, in all that quarter of the island. Winged by her own impetus and the dying breeze, the *Casco* skimmed under cliffs, opened out a cove, showed us a beach and some green trees, and flitted by again, bowing to the swell. The trees, from our distance, might have been hazel; the beach might have been in Europe; the mountain forms behind modelled in little from the Alps, and the forests which clustered on their ramparts a growth no more considerable than our Scottish heath. Again the cliff yawned, but now with a deeper entry; and the *Casco*, hauling her wind, began to slide into the bay of Anaho. The cocoa palm, that giraffe of vegetables, so graceful, so ungainly, to the European eye so foreign, was to be seen crowding on the beach, and climbing and fringing the steep sides of mountains. Rude and bare hills embraced the inlet upon either hand; it was enclosed to the landward by a bulk of shattered mountains. In every crevice of that barrier the forest harboured, roosting and nesting there like birds about a

Digitized by Google

ruin; and far above, it greened and roughened the razor edges of the summit.

Under the eastern shore, our schooner, now bereft of any breeze, continued to creep in: the smart creature, when once under way, appearing motive in herself. From close aboard arose the bleating of young lambs; a bird sang on the hillside; the scent of the land and of a hundred fruits or flowers flowed forth to meet us; and, presently, a house or two appeared, standing high upon the ankles of the hills, and one of these surrounded with what seemed a garden. These conspicuous habitations, that patch of culture, had we but known it, were a mark of the passage of whites; and we might have approached a hundred islands and not found their parallel. It was longer ere we spied the native village, standing (in the universal fashion) close upon a curve of beach, close under a grove of palms; the sea in front growling and whitening on a concave arc of reef. For the cocoa-tree and the island man are both lovers and neighbours of the surf. "The coral waxes, the palm grows, but man departs," says the sad Tahitian proverb; but they are all three, so long as they endure, co-haunters of the beach. The mark of anchorage was a blow-hole in the rocks, near the south-easterly corner of the bay. Punctually to our use, the blow-hole spouted; the schooner turned upon her heel; the anchor plunged. It was a small sound, a great event; my soul "went down with

Digitized by Google

these moorings whence no windlass may extract nor any diver fish it up; and I, and some part of my ship's company, were from that hour the bondslaves of the isles of Vivien."

Before yet the anchor plunged a canoe was already paddling from the hamlet. It contained two men: one white, one brown and tattooed across the face with bands of blue, both in immaculate white European clothes: the resident trader, Mr. Regler, and the native chief, Taipi-Kikino. "Captain, is it permitted to come on board?" were the first words we heard among the islands. Canoe followed canoe till the ship swarmed with stalwart, six-foot men in every stage of undress; some in a shirt, some in a loin-cloth, one in a handkerchief imperfectly adjusted; some, and these the more considerable, tattooed from head to foot in awful patterns; some barbarous and knived; one, who sticks in my memory as something bestial, squatting on his hams in a canoe, sucking an orange and spitting it out again to alternate sides with ape-like vivacity—all talking, and we could not understand one word; all trying to trade with us who had no thought of trading, or offering us island curios at prices palpably absurd. There was no word of welcome; no show of civility; no hand extended save that of the chief and Mr. Regler. As we still continued to refuse the proffered articles, complaint ran high and rude; and one, the jester of the party, railed upon our meanness

Digitized by Google

amid jeering laughter. Amongst other angry pleasantries—"Here is a mighty fine ship," said he, "to have no money on board!" I own I was inspired with sensible repugnance; even with alarm. The ship was manifestly in their power; we had women on board; I knew nothing of my guests beyond the fact that they were cannibals; the Directory (my only guide) was full of timid cautions; and as for the trader whose presence might else have reassured me, were not whites in the Pacific the usual instigators and accomplices of native outrage? When he reads this confession, our kind friend, Mr. Regler, can afford to smile.

Later in the day, as I sat writing up my journal, the cabin was filled from end to end with Marquesans: three brown-skinned generations, squatted cross-legged upon the floor, and regarding me in silence with embarrassing eyes. The eyes of all Polynesians are large, luminous, and melting; they are like the eyes of animals and some Italians. A kind of despair came over me, to sit there helpless under all these staring orbs, and be thus blocked in a corner of my cabin by this speechless crowd: and a kind of rage to think they were beyond the reach of articulate communication, like furred animals, or folk born deaf, or the dwellers of some alien planet.

To cross the Channel is, for a boy of twelve, to change heavens; to cross the Atlantic, for a man of twenty-four, is hardly to modify his diet.

Digitized by Google

But I was now escaped out of the shadow of the Roman empire, under whose toppling monuments we were all cradled, whose laws and letters are on every hand of us, constraining and preventing. I was now to see what men might be whose fathers had never studied Virgil, had never been conquered by Cæsar, and never been ruled by the wisdom of Gaius or Papinian. By the same step I had journeyed forth out of that comfortable zone of kindred languages, where the curse of Babel is so easy to be remedied; and my new fellow-creatures sat before me dumb like images. Methought, in my travels, all human relation was to be excluded; and when I returned home (for in those days I still projected my return) I should have but dipped into a picture-book without a text. Nay, and I even questioned if my travels should be much prolonged; perhaps they were destined to a speedy end; perhaps my subsequent friend, Kauanui, whom I remarked there, sitting silent with the rest, for a man of some authority, might leap from his hams with an ear-splitting signal, the ship be carried at a rush, and the ship's company butchered for the table.

There could be nothing more natural than these apprehensions, nor anything more groundless. In my experience of the islands, I had never again so menacing a reception; were I to meet with such to-day, I should be more alarmed and tenfold more surprised. The ma-

Digitized by Google

jority of Polynesians are easy folk to get in touch with, frank, fond of notice, greedy of the least affection, like amiable, fawning dogs; and even with the Marquesans, so recently and so imperfectly redeemed from a blood-boltered barbarism, all were to become our intimates, and one, at least, was to mourn sincerely our departure.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

MAKING FRIENDS

THE impediment of tongues was one that I particularly over-estimated. The languages of Polynesia are easy to smatter, though hard to speak with elegance. And they are extremely similar, so that a person who has a tincture of one or two may risk, not without hope, an attempt upon the others.

And again, not only is Polynesian easy to smatter, but interpreters abound. Missionaries, traders, and broken white folk living on the bounty of the natives, are to be found in almost every isle and hamlet; and even where these are unserviceable, the natives themselves have often scraped up a little English, and in the French zone (though far less commonly) a little French-English, or an efficient pidgin, what is called to the westward "Beach-la-Mar," comes easy to the Polynesian; it is now taught, besides, in the schools of Hawaii; and from the multiplicity of British ships, and the nearness of the States on the one hand and the colonies on the

Digitized by Google

other it may be called, and will almost certainly become, the tongue of the Pacific. I will instance a few examples. I met in Majuro a Marshall Island boy who spoke excellent English; this he had learned in the German firm in Jaluit, yet did not speak one word of German. I heard from a gendarme who had taught school in Rapa-iti that while the children had the utmost difficulty or reluctance to learn French, they picked up English on the wayside, and as if by accident. On one of the most out-of-the-way atolls in the Carolines, my friend Mr. Benjamin Hird was amazed to find the lads playing cricket on the beach and talking English; and it was in English that the crew of the *Janet Nicoll*, a set of black boys from different Melanesian islands, communicated with other natives throughout the cruise, transmitted orders, and sometimes jested together on the fore-hatch. But what struck me perhaps most of all was a word I heard on the verandah of the Tribunal at Noumea. A case had just been heard—a trial for infanticide against an ape-like native woman; and the audience were smoking cigarettes as they awaited the verdict. An anxious, amiable French lady, not far from tears, was eager for acquittal, and declared she would engage the prisoner to be her children's nurse. The bystanders exclaimed at the proposal; the woman was a savage, said they, and spoke no language. "*Mais, vous savez*," objected the

Digitized by Google

fair sentimentalist; "*ils apprennent si vite l'Anglais!*"

But to be able to speak to people is not all. And in the first stage of my relations with natives I was helped by two things. To begin with, I was the showman of the *Casco*. She, her fine lines, tall spars, and snowy decks, the crimson fittings of the saloon, and the white, the gilt, and the repeating mirrors of the tiny cabin, brought us a hundred visitors. The men fathomed out her dimensions with their arms, as their fathers fathomed out the ships of Cook; the women declared the cabins more lovely than a church; bouncing Junos were never weary of sitting in the chairs and contemplating in the glass their own bland images; and I have seen one lady strip up her dress, and, with cries of wonder and delight, rub herself bare-breeched upon the velvet cushions. Biscuit, jam, and syrup was the entertainment; and as in European parlours, the photograph album went the round. This sober gallery, their everyday costumes and physiognomies, had become transformed, in three weeks' sailing, into things wonderful and rich and foreign; alien faces, barbaric dresses, they were now beheld and fingered, in the swerving cabin, with innocent excitement and surprise. Her Majesty was often recognised, and I have seen French subjects kiss her photograph; Captain Speedy—in an Abyssinian war-dress, supposed to be the uniform of the British army—

Digitized by Google

met with much acceptance; and the effigies of Mr. Andrew Lang were admired in the Marquesas. There is the place for him to go when he shall be weary of Middlesex and Homer.

It was perhaps yet more important that I had enjoyed in my youth some knowledge of our Scots folk of the Highlands and the Islands. Not much beyond a century has passed since these were in the same convulsive and transitionary state as the Marquesans of to-day. In both cases an alien authority enforced, the clans disarmed, the chiefs deposed, new customs introduced, and chiefly that fashion of regarding money as the means and object of existence. The commercial age, in each, succeeding at a bound to an age of war abroad and patriarchal communism at home. In one the cherished practice of tattooing, in the other a cherished costume, proscribed. In each a main luxury cut off: beef, driven under cloud of night from Lowland pastures, denied to the meat-loving Highlander; long-pig, pirated from the next village, to the man-eating Kanaka. The grumbling, the secret ferment, the fears and resentments, the alarms and sudden councils of Marquesan chiefs, reminded me continually of the days of Lovat and Struan. Hospitality, tact, natural fine manners, and a touchy punctilio, are common to both races: common to both tongues the trick of dropping medial consonants.

Digitized by Google

Here is a table of two wide-spread Polynesian words:—

	House.	*Love.*[1]
Tahitian	FARE	AROHA
New Zealand	WHARE	
Samoan	FALE	TALOFA
Manihiki	FALE	ALOHA
Hawaiian	HALE	ALOHA
Marquesan	HA'E	KAOHA

The elision of medial consonants, so marked in these Marquesan instances, is no less common both in Gaelic and the Lowland Scots. Stranger still, that prevalent Polynesian sound, the so-called catch, written with an apostrophe, and often or always the gravestone of a perished consonant, is to be heard in Scotland to this day. When a Scot pronounces water, better, or bottle —*wa'er*, *be'er*, or *bo'le*—the sound is precisely that of the catch; and I think we may go beyond and say, that if such a population could be isolated, and this mispronunciation should become the rule, it might prove the first stage of transition from *t* to *k*, which is the disease of Polynesian languages. The tendency of the Marquesans, however, is to urge against consonants, or at least on the very common letter *l*, a war of mere extermination. A hiatus is agreeable to any Polynesian ear; the ear even of the stranger soon grows used to these barbaric voids; but only in the Marquesan will you find such names as

[1]Where that word is used as a salutation I give that form.

Digitized by Google

Haaii and *Paaaeua*, when each individual vowel must be separately uttered.

These points of similarity between a South Sea people and some of my own folk at home ran much in my head in the islands; and not only inclined me to view my fresh acquaintances with favour, but continually modified my judgment. A polite Englishman comes to-day to the Marquesans and is amazed to find the men tattooed; polite Italians came not long ago to England and found our fathers stained with woad; and when I paid the return visit as a little boy, I was highly diverted with the backwardness of Italy: so insecure, so much a matter of the day and hour, is the pre-eminence of race. It was so that I hit upon a means of communication which I recommend to travellers. When I desired any detail of savage custom, or of superstitious belief, I cast back in the story of my fathers, and fished for what I wanted with some trait of equal barbarism: Michael Scott, Lord Derwentwater's head, the second-sight, the Water Kelpie,—each of these I have found to be a killing bait; the black bull's head of Stirling procured me the legend of *Rahero;* and what I knew of the Cluny Macphersons, or the Appin Stewarts, enabled me to learn, and helped me to understand, about the *Tevas* of Tahiti. The native was no longer ashamed, his sense of kinship grew warmer, and his lips were opened. It is this sense of kinship that the traveller must rouse and share; or he

Digitized by Google

had better content himself with travels from the blue bed to the brown. And the presence of one Cockney titterer will cause a whole party to walk in clouds of darkness.

The hamlet of Anaho stands on a margin of flat land between the west of the beach and the spring of the impending mountains. A grove of palms, perpetually ruffling its green fans, carpets it (as for a triumph) with fallen branches, and shades it like an arbour. A road runs from end to end of the covert among beds of flowers, the milliner's shop of the community; and here and there, in the grateful twilight, in an air filled with a diversity of scents, and still within hearing of the surf upon the reef, the native houses stand in scattered neighbourhood. The same word, as we have seen, represents in many tongues of Polynesia, with scarce a shade of difference, the abode of man. But although the word be the same, the structure itself continually varies; and the Marquesan, among the most backward and barbarous of islanders, was yet the most commodiously lodged. The grass huts of Hawaii, the birdcage houses of Tahiti, or the open shed, with the crazy Venetian blinds, of the polite Samoan—none of these can be compared with the Marquesan *paepae-hae*, or dwelling platform. The paepae is an oblong terrace built without cement of black volcanic stone, from twenty to fifty feet in length, raised from four to eight feet from the earth, and accessible

Digitized by Google

by a broad stair. Along the back of this, and coming to about half its width, runs the open front of the house, like a covered gallery: the interior sometimes neat and almost elegant in its bareness, the sleeping space divided off by an end-long coaming, some bright raiment perhaps hanging from a nail, and a lamp and one of White's sewing-machines the only marks of civilisation. On the outside, at one end of the terrace, burns the cooking-fire under a shed; at the other there is perhaps a pen for pigs; the remainder is the evening lounge and *al fresco* banquet-hall of the inhabitants. To some houses water is brought down the mountain in bamboo pipes, perforated for the sake of sweetness. With the Highland comparison in my mind, I was struck to remember the sluttish mounds of turf and stone in which I have sat and been entertained in the Hebrides and the North Islands. Two things, I suppose, explain the contrast. In Scotland wood is rare, and with materials so rude as turf and stone the very hope of neatness is excluded. And in Scotland it is cold. Shelter and a hearth are needs so pressing that a man looks not beyond; he is out all day after a bare bellyful, and at night when he saith, "Aha, it is warm!" he has not appetite for more. Or if for something else, then something higher; a fine school of poetry and song arose in these rough shelters, and an air like "*Lochaber no more*" is an evidence of refinement

Digitized by Google

more convincing, as well as more imperishable, than a palace.

To one such dwelling platform a considerable troop of relatives and dependents resort. In the hour of the dusk, when the fire blazes, and the scent of the cooked breadfruit fills the air, and perhaps the lamp glints already between the pillars of the house, you shall behold them silently assemble to this meal, men, women, and children; and the dogs and pigs frisk together up the terrace stairway, switching rival tails. The strangers from the ship were soon equally welcome: welcome to dip their fingers in the wooden dish, to drink cocoa-nuts, to share the circulating pipe, and to hear and hold high debate about the misdeeds of the French, the Panama Canal, or the geographical position of San Francisco and New Yo'ko. In a Highland hamlet, quite out of reach of any tourist, I have met the same plain and dignified hospitality.

I have mentioned two facts—the distasteful behaviour of our earliest visitors, and the case of the lady who rubbed herself upon the cushions —which would give a very false opinion of Marquesan manners. The great majority of Polynesians are excellently mannered; but the Marquesan stands apart, annoying and attractive, wild, shy, and refined. If you make him a present he affects to forget it, and it must be offered him again at his going: a pretty formality I have found nowhere else. A hint will get rid

Digitized by Google

of any one or any number; they are so fiercely proud and modest; while many of the more lovable but blunter islanders crowd upon a stranger, and can be no more driven off than flies. A slight or an insult the Marquesan seems never to forget. I was one day talking by the wayside with my friend Hoka, when I perceived his eyes suddenly to flash and his stature to swell. A white horseman was coming down the mountain, and as he passed, and while he paused to exchange salutations with myself, Hoka was still staring and ruffling like a gamecock. It was a Corsican who had years before called him *cochon sauvage—coçon chauvage*, as Hoka mispronounced it. With people so nice and so touchy, it was scarce to be supposed that our company of greenhorns should not blunder into offences. Hoka, on one of his visits, fell suddenly in a brooding silence, and presently after left the ship with cold formality. When he took me back into favour, he adroitly and pointedly explained the nature of my offence: I had asked him to sell cocoa-nuts; and in Hoka's view articles of food were things that a gentleman should give, not sell; or at least that he should not sell to any friend. On another occasion I gave my boat's crew a luncheon of chocolate and biscuits. I had sinned, I could never learn how, against some point of observance; and though I was drily thanked, my offerings were left upon the beach. But our worst mistake was a slight we

Digitized by Google

put on Toma, Hoka's adopted father, and in his own eyes the rightful chief of Anaho. In the first place, we did not call upon him, as perhaps we should, in his fine new European house, the only one in the hamlet. In the second, when we came ashore upon a visit to his rival, Taipi-kikino, it was Toma whom we saw standing at the head of the beach, a magnificent figure of a man, magnificently tattooed; and it was of Toma that we asked our question: "Where is the chief?" "What chief?" cried Toma, and turned his back on the blasphemers. Nor did he forgive us. Hoka came and went with us daily; but, alone I believe of all the countryside, neither Toma nor his wife set foot on board the *Casco*. The temptation resisted it is hard for a European to compute. The flying city of Laputa moored for a fortnight in St. James's Park affords but a pale figure of the *Casco* anchored before Anaho; for the Londoner has still his change of pleasures, but the Marquesan passes to his grave through an unbroken uniformity of days.

On the afternoon before it was intended we should sail, a valedictory party came on board: nine of our particular friends equipped with gifts and dressed as for a festival. Hoka, the chief dancer and singer, the greatest dandy of Anaho, and one of the handsomest young fellows in the world—sullen, showy, dramatic, light as a feather and strong as an ox—it would have been hard, on that occasion, to recognise, as

Digitized by Google

he sat there stooped and silent, his face heavy and grey. It was strange to see the lad so much affected; stranger still to recognise in his last gift one of the curios we had refused on the first day, and to know our friend, so gaily dressed, so plainly moved at our departure, for one of the half-naked crew that had besieged and insulted us on our arrival: strangest of all, perhaps, to find, in that carved handle of a fan, the last of those curiosities of the first day which had now all been given to us by their possessors—their chief merchandise, for which they had sought to ransom us as long as we were strangers, which they pressed on us for nothing as soon as we were friends. The last visit was not long protracted. One after another they shook hands and got down into their canoe; when Hoka turned his back immediately upon the ship, so that we saw his face no more. Taipi, on the other hand, remained standing and facing us with gracious valedictory gestures; and when Captain Otis dipped the ensign, the whole party saluted with their hats. This was the farewell; the episode of our visit to Anaho was held concluded; and though the *Casco* remained nearly forty hours at her moorings, not one returned on board, and I am inclined to think they avoided appearing on the beach. This reserve and dignity is the finest trait of the Marquesan.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

THE MAROON

OF the beauties of Anaho books might be written. I remember waking about three, to find the air temperate and scented. The long swell brimmed into the bay, and seemed to fill it full and then subside. Gently, deeply, and silently the *Casco* rolled; only at times a block piped like a bird. Oceanward, the heaven was bright with stars and the sea with their reflections. If I looked to that side, I might have sung with the Hawaiian poet:

> "*Ua maomao ka lani, ua kahaea luna,*
> *Ua pipi ka maka o ka hoku.*
> (The heavens were fair, they stretched above,
> Many were the eyes of the stars.)"

And then I turned shoreward, and high squalls were overhead; the mountains loomed up black; and I could have fancied I had slipped ten thousand miles away and was anchored in a Highland loch; that when the day came, it would show pine, and heather, and green fern, and roofs of turf sending up the smoke of peats; and the

Digitized by Google

alien speech that should next greet my ears must be Gaelic, not Kanaka.

And day, when it came, brought other sights and thoughts. I have watched the morning break in many quarters of the world; it has been certainly one of the chief joys of my existence, and the dawn that I saw with most emotion shone upon the bay of Anaho. The mountains abruptly overhang the port with every variety of surface and of inclination, lawn, and cliff, and forest. Not one of these but wore its proper tint of saffron, of sulphur, of the clove, and of the rose. The lustre was like that of satin; on the lighter hues there seemed to float an efflorescence; a solemn bloom appeared on the more dark. The light itself was the ordinary light of morning, colourless and clean; and on this ground of jewels, pencilled out the least detail of drawing. Meanwhile, around the hamlet, under the palms, where the blue shadow lingered, the red coals of cocoa husk and the light trails of smoke betrayed the awakening business of the day; along the beach men and women, lads and lasses, were returning from the bath in bright raiment, red and blue and green, such as we delighted to see in the coloured little pictures of our childhood; and presently the sun had cleared the eastern hill, and the glow of the day was over all.

The glow continued and increased, the business, from the main part, ceased before it had

Digitized by Google

begun. Twice in the day there was a certain stir of shepherding along the seaward hills. At times a canoe went out to fish. At times a woman or two languidly filled a basket in the cotton patch. At times a pipe would sound out of the shadow of a house, ringing the changes on its three notes, with an effect like *Que le jour me dure* repeated endlessly. Or at times, across a corner of the bay, two natives might communicate in the Marquesan manner with conventional whistlings. All else was sleep and silence. The surf broke and shone around the shores; a species of black crane fished in the broken water; the black pigs were continually galloping by on some affair; but the people might never have awaked, or they might all be dead.

My favourite haunt was opposite the hamlet, where was a landing in a cove under a lianaed cliff. The beach was lined with palms and a tree called the purao, something between the fig and mulberry in growth, and bearing a flower like a great yellow poppy with a maroon heart. In places rocks encroached upon the sand; the beach would be all submerged; and the surf would bubble warmly as high as to my knees, and play with cocoa-nut husks as our more homely ocean plays with wreck and wrack and bottles. As the reflux drew down, marvels of colour and design streamed between my feet; which I would grasp at, miss, or seize: now to find them what they promised, shells to grace a cabinet or be set in

Digitized by Google

gold upon a lady's finger; now to catch only *maya* of coloured sand, pounded fragments and pebbles, that, as soon as they were dry, became as dull and homely as the flints upon a garden path. I have toiled at this childish pleasure for hours in the strong sun, conscious of my incurable ignorance; but too keenly pleased to be ashamed. Meanwhile, the blackbird (or his tropical understudy) would be fluting in the thickets overhead.

A little farther, in the turn of the bay, a streamlet trickled in the bottom of a den, thence spilling down a stair of rock into the sea. The draught of air drew down under the foliage in the very bottom of the den, which was a perfect arbour for coolness. In front it stood open on the blue bay and the *Casco* lying there under her awning and her cheerful colours. Overhead was a thatch of puraos, and over these again palms brandished their bright fans, as I have seen a conjurer make himself a halo out of naked swords. For in this spot, over a neck of low land at the foot of the mountains, the trade-wind streams into Anaho Bay in a flood of almost constant volume and velocity, and of a heavenly coolness.

It chanced one day that I was ashore in the cove with Mrs. Stevenson and the ship's cook. Except for the *Casco* lying outside, and a crane or two, and the ever-busy wind and sea, the face of the world was of a prehistoric emptiness; life

Digitized by Google

appeared to stand stockstill, and the sense of isolation was profound and refreshing. On a sudden, the trade-wind, coming in a gust over the isthmus, struck and scattered the fans of the palms above the den; and, behold! in two of the tops there sat a native, motionless as an idol and watching us, you would have said, without a wink. The next moment the tree closed, and the glimpse was gone. This discovery of human presences latent overhead in a place where we had supposed ourselves alone, the immobility of our tree-top spies, and the thought that perhaps at all hours we were similarly supervised, struck us with a chill. Talk languished on the beach. As for the cook (whose conscience was not clear), he never afterwards set foot on shore, and twice, when the *Casco* appeared to be driving on the rocks, it was amusing to observe that man's alacrity; death, he was persuaded, awaiting him upon the beach. It was more than a year later, in the Gilberts, that the explanation dawned upon myself. The natives were drawing palm-tree wine, a thing forbidden by law; and when the wind thus suddenly revealed them, they were doubtless more troubled than ourselves.

At the top of the den there dwelt an old, melancholy, grizzled man of the name of Tari (Charlie) Coffin. He was a native of Oahu, in the Sandwich Islands; and had gone to sea in his youth in the American whalers; a circum-

Digitized by Google

stance to which he owed his name, his English, his down-east twang, and the misfortune of his innocent life. For one captain, sailing out of New Bedford, carried him to Nuka-hiva and marooned him there among the cannibals. The motive for this act was inconceivably small; poor Tari's wages, which were thus economised, would scarce have shook the credit of the New Bedford owners. And the act itself was simply murder. Tari's life must have hung in the beginning by a hair. In the grief and terror of that time, it is not unlikely he went mad, an infirmity to which he was still liable; or perhaps a child may have taken a fancy to him and ordained him to be spared. He escaped at least alive, married in the island, and when I knew him was a widower with a married son and a granddaughter. But the thought of Oahu haunted him; its praise was for ever on his lips; he beheld it, looking back, as a place of ceaseless feasting, song, and dance; and in his dreams I daresay he revisits it with joy. I wonder what he would think if he could be carried there indeed, and see the modern town of Honolulu brisk with traffic, and the palace with its guards, and the great hotel, and Mr. Berger's band with their uniforms and outlandish instruments; or what he would think to see the brown faces grown so few and the white so many; and his father's land sold for planting sugar, and his father's house quite perished, or perhaps the last of them

Digitized by Google

struck leprous and immured between the surf and the cliffs on Molokai. So simply, even in South Sea Islands, and so sadly, the changes come.

Tari was poor, and poorly lodged. His house was a wooden frame, run up by Europeans; it was indeed his official residence, for Tari was the shepherd of the promontory sheep. I can give a perfect inventory of its contents: three kegs, a tin biscuit-box, an iron sauce-pan, several cocoa-shell cups, a lantern, and three bottles, probably containing oil; while the clothes of the family and a few mats were thrown across the open rafters. Upon my first meeting with this exile he had conceived for me one of the baseless island friendships, had given me nuts to drink, and carried me up the den "to see my house"—the only entertainment that he had to offer. He liked the "Amelican," he said, and the "Inglisman," but the "Flessman" was his abhorrence; and he was careful to explain that if he had thought us "Fless," we should have had none of his nuts, and never a sight of his house. His distaste for the French I can partly understand, but not at all his toleration of the Anglo-Saxon. The next day he brought me a pig, and some days later one of our party going ashore found him in act to bring a second. We were still strange to the islands; we were pained by the poor man's generosity, which he could ill afford; and by a natural enough but quite un-

Digitized by Google

pardonable blunder, we refused the pig. Had Tari been a Marquesan we should have seen him no more; being what he was, the most mild, long-suffering, melancholy man, he took a revenge a hundred times more painful. Scarce had the canoe with the nine villagers put off from their farewell before the *Casco* was boarded from the other side. It was Tari; coming thus late because he had no canoe of his own, and had found it hard to borrow one; coming thus solitary (as indeed we always saw him), because he was a stranger in the land, and the dreariest of company. The rest of my family basely fled from the encounter. I must receive our injured friend alone; and the interview must have lasted hard upon an hour, for he was loath to tear himself away. "You go 'way. I see you no more —no, sir!" he lamented; and then looking about him with rueful admiration, "This goodee ship! —no, sir!—goodee ship!" he would exclaim: the "no, sir," thrown out sharply through the nose upon a rising inflection, an echo from New Bedford and the fallacious whaler. From these expressions of grief and praise, he would return continually to the case of the rejected pig. "I like give plesent all the same you," he complained; "only got pig: you no take him!" he was a poor man; he had no choice of gifts; he had only a pig, he repeated: and I had refused it. I have rarely been more wretched than to see him sitting there, so old, so grey, so poor, so

Digitized by Google

hardly fortuned, of so rueful a countenance, and to appreciate, with growing keenness, the affront which I had so innocently dealt him; but it was one of those cases in which speech is vain.

Tari's son was smiling and inert; his daughter-in-law, a girl of sixteen, pretty, gentle, and grave, more intelligent than most Anaho women, and with a fair share of French; his grandchild, a mite of a creature at the breast. I went up the den one day when Tari was from home, and found the son making a cotton sack, and madame suckling mademoiselle. When I had sat down with them on the floor, the girl began to question me about England; which I tried to describe, piling the pan and the cocoa shells one upon another to represent the houses, and explaining, as best I was able, and by word and gesture, the over-population, the hunger, and the perpetual toil. "*Pas de cocotiers? pas de popoi?*" she asked. I told her it was too cold, and went through an elaborate performance, shutting out draughts, and crouching over an imaginary fire, to make sure she understood. But she understood right well; remarked it must be bad for the health, and sat a while gravely reflecting on that picture of unwonted sorrows. I am sure it roused her pity, for it struck in her another thought always uppermost in the Marquesan bosom; and she began with a smiling sadness, and looking on me out of melancholy eyes, to lament the decease of her own

Digitized by Google

people. "*Ici pas de Kanaques*," said she; and taking the baby from her breast, she held it out to me with both her hands. "*Tenez*—a little baby like this; then dead. All the Kanaques die. Then no more." The smile, and this instancing by the girl-mother of her own tiny flesh and blood, affected me strangely; they spoke of so tranquil a despair. Meanwhile the husband smilingly made his sack; and the unconscious babe struggled to reach a pot of raspberry jam, friendship's offering, which I had just brought up the den; and in a perspective of centuries I saw their case as ours, death coming in like a tide, and the day already numbered when there should be no more Beretani, and no more of any race whatever, and (what oddly touched me) no more literary works and no more readers.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

DEATH

THE thought of death, I have said, is uppermost in the mind of the Marquesan. It would be strange if it were otherwise. The race is perhaps the handsomest extant. Six feet is about the middle height of males; they are strongly muscled, free from fat, swift in action, graceful in repose; and the women, though fatter and duller, are still comely animals. To judge by the eye, there is no race more viable; and yet death reaps them with both hands. When Bishop Dordillon first came to Tai-o-hae, he reckoned the inhabitants at many thousands; he was but newly dead, and in the same bay Stanislao Moanatini counted on his fingers eight residual natives. Or take the valley of Hapaa, known to readers of Herman Melville under the grotesque misspelling of Hapar. There are but two writers who have touched the South Seas with any genius, both Americans: Melville and Charles Warren Stoddard; and at the christening of the first and greatest, some influential fairy must have been neglected: "He shall be

Digitized by Google

able to see," "He shall be able to tell," "He shall be able to charm," said the friendly god-mothers; "But he shall not be able to hear," exclaimed the last. The tribe of Hapaa is said to have numbered some four hundred, when the small-pox came and reduced them by one-fourth. Six months later a woman developed tubercular consumption; the disease spread like a fire about the valley, and in less than a year two survivors, a man and a woman, fled from that new-created solitude. A similar Adam and Eve may some day wither among new races, the tragic residue of Britain. When I first heard this story the date staggered me; but I am now inclined to think it possible. Early in the year of my visit, for example, or late the year before, a first case of phthisis appeared in a household of seventeen persons, and by the month of August, when the tale was told me, one soul survived, and that was a boy who had been absent at his schooling. And depopulation works both ways, the doors of death being set wide open, and the door of birth almost closed. Thus, in the half-year ending July, 1888, there were twelve deaths and but one birth in the district of the Hatiheu. Seven or eight more deaths were to be looked for in the ordinary course; and M. Aussel, the observant gendarme, knew of but one likely birth. At this rate it is no matter of surprise if the population in that part should have declined in forty years from six thousand to less than four hundred;

Digitized by Google

which are, once more on the authority of M. Aussel, the estimated figures. And the rate of decline must have even accelerated towards the end.

A good way to appreciate the depopulation is to go by land from Anaho to Hatiheu on the adjacent bay. The road is good travelling, but cruelly steep. We seemed scarce to have passed the deserted house which stands highest in Anaho before we were looking dizzily down upon its roof; the *Casco* well out in the bay, and rolling for a wager, shrank visibly; and presently through the gap of Tari's isthmus, Ua-huna was seen to hang cloudlike on the horizon. Over the summit, where the wind blew really chill, and whistled in the reed-like grass, and tossed the grassy fell of the pandanus, we stepped suddenly, as through a door, into the next vale and bay of Hatiheu. A bowl of mountains encloses it upon three sides. On the fourth this rampart has been bombarded into ruins, runs down to seaward in imminent and shattered crags, and presents the one practicable breach of the blue bay. The interior of this vessel is crowded with lovely and valuable trees,—orange, breadfruit, mummy-apple, cocoa, the island chestnut, and for weeds, the pine and the banana. Four perennial streams water and keep it green; and along the dell first of one, then of another, of these, the road, for a considerable distance, descends into this fortunate valley. The song of the waters and the

Digitized by Google

familiar disarray of boulders gave us a strong sense of home, which the exotic foliage, the daft-like growth of the pandanus, the buttressed trunk of the banyan, the black pigs galloping in the bush, and the architecture of the native houses dissipated ere it could be enjoyed.

The houses on the Hatiheu side begin high up; higher yet, the more melancholy spectacle of empty paepaes. When a native habitation is deserted, the superstructure—pandanus thatch, wattle, unstable tropical timber—speedily rots, and is speedily scattered by the wind. Only the stones of the terrace endure; nor can any ruin, cairn, or standing stone, or vitrified fort present a more stern appearance of antiquity. We must have passed from six to eight of these now houseless platforms. On the main road of the island where it crosses the valley of Taipi, Mr. Osbourne tells me they are to be reckoned by the dozen; and as the roads have been made long posterior to their erection, perhaps to their desertion, and must simply be regarded as lines drawn at random through the bush, the forest on either hand must be equally filled with these survivals: the gravestones of whole families. Such ruins are tapu in the strictest sense; no native must approach them; they have become outposts of the kingdom of the grave. It might appear a natural and pious custom in the hundreds who are left, the rearguard of perished thousands, that their feet should leave untrod

Digitized by Google

these hearthstones of their fathers. I believe, in fact, the custom rests on different and more grim conceptions. But the house, the grave, and even the body of the dead, have been always particularly honoured by Marquesans. Until recently the corpse was sometimes kept in the family and daily oiled and sunned, until, by gradual and revolting stages, it dried into a kind of mummy. Offerings are still laid upon the grave. In Traitor's Bay, Mr. Osbourne saw a man buy a looking-glass to lay upon his son's. And the sentiment against the desecration of tombs, thoughtlessly ruffled in the laying down of the new roads, is a chief ingredient in the native hatred for the French.

The Marquesan beholds with dismay the approaching extinction of his race. The thought of death sits down with him to meat, and rises with him from his bed; he lives and breathes under a shadow of mortality awful to support; and he is so inured to the apprehension that he greets the reality with relief. He does not even seek to support a disappointment; at an affront, at a breach of one of his fleeting and communistic love affairs, he seeks an instant refuge in the grave. Hanging is now the fashion. I heard of three who had hanged themselves in the west end of Hiva-oa during the first half of 1888; but though this be a common form of suicide in other parts of the South Seas, I cannot think it will continue popular in the Marquesas. Far more

Digitized by Google

suitable to Marquesan sentiment is the old form of poisoning with the fruit of the eva, which offers to the native suicide a cruel but deliberate death, and gives time for those decencies of the last hour, to which he attaches such remarkable importance. The coffin can thus be at hand, the pigs killed, the cry of the mourners sounding already through the house; and then it is, and not before, that the Marquesan is conscious of achievement, his life all rounded in, his robes (like Cæsar's) adjusted for the final act. Praise not any man till he is dead, said the ancients; envy not any man till you hear the mourners, might be the Marquesan parody. The coffin, though of late introduction, strangely engages their attention. It is to the mature Marquesan what a watch is to the European schoolboy. For ten years Queen Vaekehu had dunned the fathers; at last, but the other day, they let her have her will, gave her her coffin, and the woman's soul is at rest. I was told a droll instance of the force of this pre-occupation. The Polynesians are subject to a disease seemingly rather of the will than of the body. I was told the Tahitians have a word for it, *erimatua*, but cannot find it in my dictionary. A gendarme, M. Nouveau, has seen men beginning to succumb to this substantial malady, has routed them from their houses, turned them on to do their trick upon the roads, and in two days has seen them cured. But this other remedy is more original:

Digitized by Google

a Marquesan, dying of this discouragement—perhaps I should rather say this acquiescence—has been known, at the fulfilment of his crowning wish, on the mere sight of that desired hermitage, his coffin—to revive, recover, shake off the hand of death, and be restored for years to his occupations—carving *tikis* (idols), let us say, or braiding old men's beards. From all this it may be conceived how easily they meet death when it approaches naturally. I heard one example, grim and picturesque. In the time of the small-pox in Hapaa, an old man was seized with the disease; he had no thought of recovery; had his grave dug by a wayside, and lived in it for near a fortnight, eating, drinking, and smoking with the passers-by, talking mostly of his end, and equally unconcerned for himself and careless of the friend whom he infected.

This proneness to suicide and loose seat in life is not peculiar to the Marquesan. What is peculiar is the wide-spread depression and acceptance of the national end. Pleasures are neglected, the dance languishes, the songs are forgotten. It is true that some, and perhaps too many, of them are proscribed; but many remain, if there were spirit to support or to revive them. At the last feast of the Bastille, Stanislao Moanatini shed tears when he beheld the inanimate performance of the dancers. When the people sang for us in Anaho, they must apologise for the smallness of their repertory. They were

Digitized by Google

only young folk present, they said, and it was only the old that knew the songs. The whole body of Marquesan poetry and music was being suffered to die out with a single dispirited generation. The full import is apparent only to one acquainted with other Polynesian races; who knows how the Samoan coins a fresh song for every trifling incident, or who has heard (on Penrhyn, for instance) a band of little stripling maids from eight to twelve keep up their minstrelsy for hours upon a stretch, one song following another without pause. In like manner, the Marquesan, never industrious, begins now to cease altogether from production. The exports of the group decline out of all proportion even with the death-rate of the islanders. "The coral waxes, the palm grows, and man departs," says the Marquesan; and he folds his hands. And surely this is nature. Fond as it may appear, we labour and refrain, not for the rewards of any single life, but with a timid eye upon the lives and memories of our successors; and where no one is to succeed, of his own family, or his own tongue, I doubt whether Rothschilds would make money or Cato practise virtue. It is natural, also, that a temporary stimulus should sometimes rouse the Marquesan from his lethargy. Over all the landward shore of Anaho cotton runs like a wild weed; man or woman, whoever comes to pick it, may earn a dollar in the day; yet when we arrived, the trader's store-house was entirely

Digitized by Google

empty; and before we left it was near full. So long as the circus was there, so long as the *Casco* was yet anchored in the bay, it behoved every one to make his visit; and to this end every woman must have a new dress, and every man a shirt and trousers. Never before, in Mr. Regler's experience, had they displayed so much activity.

In their despondency there is an element of dread. The fear of ghosts and of the dark is very deeply written in the mind of the Polynesian; not least of the Marquesan. Poor Taipi, the chief of Anaho, was condemned to ride to Hatiheu on a moonless night. He borrowed a lantern, sat a long while nerving himself for the adventure, and when he at last departed, wrung the *Cascos* by the hand as for a final separation. Certain presences, called Vehinehae, frequent and make terrible the nocturnal roadside; I was told by one they were like so much mist, and as the traveller walked into them dispersed and dissipated; another described them as being shaped like men and having eyes like cats; from none could I obtain the smallest clearness as to what they did, or wherefore they were dreaded. We may be sure at least they represent the dead; for the dead, in the minds of the islanders, are all-pervasive. "When a native says that he is a man," writes Dr. Coddington, "he means that he is a man and not a ghost; not that he is a man and not a beast. The intelligent agents of this

Digitized by Google

world are to his mind the men who are alive, and the ghosts the men who are dead." Dr. Coddington speaks of Melanesia; from what I have learned his words are equally true of the Polynesian. And yet more. Among cannibal Polynesians a dreadful suspicion rests generally on the dead; and the Marquesans, the greatest cannibals of all, are scarce likely to be free from similiar beliefs. I hazard the guess that the Vehinehae are the hungry spirits of the dead, continuing their life's business of the cannibal ambuscade, and lying everywhere unseen, and eager to devour the living. Another superstition I picked up through the troubled medium of Tari Coffin's English. The dead, he told me, came and danced by night around the paepae of their former family; the family were thereupon overcome by some emotion (but whether of pious sorrow or of fear I could not gather), and must "make a feast," of which fish, pig, and popoi were indispensable ingredients. So far this is clear enough. But here Tari went on to instance the new house of Toma and the housewarming feast which was just then in preparation as instances in point. Dare we indeed string them together, and add the case of the deserted ruin, as though the dead continually besieged the paepaes of the living: were kept at arm's-length, even from the first foundation, only by propitiatory feasts, and so soon as the fire of life went out upon the hearth,

Digitized by Google

swarmed back into possession of their ancient seat?

I speak by guess of these Marquesan superstitions. On the cannibal ghost I shall return elsewhere with certainty. And it is enough, for the present purpose, to remark that the men of the Marquesans, from whatever reason, fear and shrink from the presence of ghosts. Conceive how this must tell upon the nerves in islands where the number of the dead already so far exceeds that of the living, and the dead multiply and the living dwindle at so swift a rate. Conceive how the remnant huddles about the embers of the fire of life; even as old Red Indians, deserted on the march and in the snow, the kindly tribe all gone, the last flame expiring, and the night around populous with wolves.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

DEPOPULATION

OVER the whole extent of the South Seas, from one tropic to another, we find traces of a bygone state of over-population, when the resources of even a tropical soil were taxed, and even the improvident Polynesian trembled for the future. We may accept some of the ideas of Mr. Darwin's theory of coral islands, and suppose a rise of the sea, or the subsidence of some former continental area, to have driven into the tops of the mountains multitudes of refugees. Or we may suppose, more soberly, a people of sea-rovers, emigrants from a crowded country, to strike upon and settle island after island, and as time went on to multiply exceedingly in their new seats. In either case the end must be the same; soon or late it must grow apparent that the crew are too numerous, and that famine is at hand. The Polynesians met this emergent danger with various expedients of activity and prevention. A way was found to preserve bread-fruit by packing it in artificial pits; pits forty feet in depth and of proportionate bore are still to be

Digitized by Google

seen, I am told, in the Marquesas; and yet even these were insufficient for the teeming people, and the annals of the past are gloomy with famine and cannibalism. Among the Hawaiians—a hardier people, in a more exacting climate—agriculture was carried far; the land was irrigated with canals; and the fish-ponds of Molokai prove the number and diligence of the old inhabitants. Meanwhile, over all the island world, abortion and infanticide prevailed. On coral atolls, where the danger was most plainly obvious, these were enforced by law and sanctioned by punishment. On Vaitupu, in the Ellices, only two children were allowed to a couple; on Nukufetau, but one. On the latter the punishment was by fine; and it is related that the fine was sometimes paid and the child spared.

This is characteristic. For no people in the world are so fond or so long-suffering with children—children make the mirth and the adornment of their homes, serving them for playthings and for picture-galleries. "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them." The stray bastard is contended for by rival families; and the natural and the adopted children play and grow up together undistinguished. The spoiling, and I may almost say the deification, of the child, is nowhere carried so far as in the eastern islands; and furthest, according to my opportunities of observation, in the Paumotu group, the so-called Low or Dangerous Archipelago. I

Digitized by Google

have seen a Paumotuan native turn from me with embarrassment and disaffection because I suggested that a brat would be the better for a beating. It is a daily matter in some eastern islands to see a child strike or even stone its mother and the mother, so far from punishing, scarce ventures to resist. In some, when his child was born, a chief was superseded and resigned his name; as though, like a drone, he had then fulfilled the occasion of his being. And in some the lightest words of children had the weight of oracles. Only the other day, in the Marquesas, if a child conceived a distaste to any stranger, I am assured the stranger would be slain. And I shall have to tell in another place an instance of the opposite: how a child in Manihiki having taken a fancy to myself, her adoptive parents at once accepted the situation and loaded me with gifts.

With such sentiments the necessity for child-destruction would not fail to clash, and I believe we find the trace of divided feeling in the Tahitian brotherhood of Oro. At a certain date a new god was added to the Society-Island Olympus, or an old one refurbished and made popular. Oro was his name, and he may be compared with the Bacchus of the ancients. His zealots sailed from bay to bay, and from island to island; they were everywhere received with feasting; wore fine clothes; sang, danced, acted; gave exhibitions of dexterity and strength; and were the

Digitized by Google

artists, the acrobats, the bards, and the harlots of the group. Their life was public and epicurean; their initiation a mystery; and the highest in the land aspired to join the brotherhood. If a couple stood next in line to a high-chieftaincy, they were suffered, on grounds of policy, to spare one child; all other children, who had a father or a mother in the company of Oro, stood condemned from the moment of conception. A freemasonry, an agnostic sect, a company of artists, its members all under oath to spread unchastity, and all forbidden to leave offspring—I do not know how it may appear to others, but to me the design seems obvious. Famine menacing the islands, and the needful remedy repulsive, it was recommended to the native mind by these trappings of mystery, pleasure, and parade. This is the more probable, and the secret, serious purpose of the institution appears the more plainly, if it be true, that after a certain period of life, the obligation of the votary was changed; at first, bound to be profligate: afterwards, expected to be chaste.

Here, then, we have one side of the case. Man-eating among kindly men, child-murder among child-lovers, industry in a race the most idle, invention in a race the least progressive, this grim, pagan salvation army of the brotherhood of Oro, the report of early voyagers, the wide-spread vestiges of former habitation, and the universal tradition of the islands, all point to

Digitized by Google

the same fact of former crowding and alarm. And to-day we are face to face with the reverse. To-day in the Marquesas, in the Eight Islands of Hawaii, in Mangareva, in Easter Island, we find the same race perishing like flies. Why this change? Or, grant that the coming of the whites, the change of habits, and the introduction of new maladies and vices, fully explain the depopulation, why is that depopulation not universal? The population of Tahiti, after a period of alarming decrease, has again become stationary. I hear of a similar result among some Maori tribes; in many of the Paumotus a slight increase is to be observed; and the Samoans are to-day as healthy and at least as fruitful as before the change. Grant that the Tahitians, the Maoris, and the Paumotuans have become inured to the new conditions; and what are we to make of the Samoans, who have never suffered?

Those who are acquainted only with a single group are apt to be ready with solutions. Thus I have heard the mortality of the Maoris attributed to their change of residence—from fortified hill-tops to the low, marshy vicinity of their plantations. How plausible! And yet the Marquesans are dying out in the same houses where their fathers multiplied. Or take opium. The Marquesas and Hawaii are the two groups the most infected with this vice; the population of the one is the most civilised, that of the other by far the most barbarous, of Polynesians; and they

Digitized by Google

are two of those that perish the most rapidly. Here is a strong case against opium. But let us take unchastity, and we shall find the Marquesas and Hawaii figuring again upon another count. Thus, Samoans are the most chaste of Polynesians, and they are to this day, entirely fertile; Marquesans are the most debauched: we have seen how they are perishing; Hawaiians are notoriously lax, and they begin to be dotted among deserts. So here is a case stronger still against unchastity; and here also we have a correction to apply. Whatever the virtues of the Tahitian, neither friend nor enemy dares call him chaste; and yet he seems to have outlived the time of danger. One last example: syphilis has been plausibly credited with much of the sterility. But the Samoans are, by all accounts, as fruitful as at first; by some accounts more so; and it is not seriously to be argued that the Samoans have escaped syphilis.

These examples show how dangerous it is to reason from any particular cause, or even from many in a single group. I have in my eye an able and amiable pamphlet by the Rev. S. E. Bishop: "Why are the Hawaiians Dying Out?" Any one interested in the subject ought to read this tract, which contains real information; and yet Mr. Bishop's views would have been changed by an acquaintance with other groups. Samoa is, for the moment, the main and the most instructive exception to the rule. The people are

Digitized by Google

the most chaste and one of the most temperate of island peoples. They have never been tried and depressed with any grave pestilence. Their clothing has scarce been tampered with; at the simple and becoming tabard of the girls, Tartuffe, in many another island, would have cried out; for the cool, healthy, and modest lava-lava or kilt, Tartuffe has managed in many another island to substitute stifling and inconvenient trousers. Lastly, and perhaps chiefly, so far from their amusements having been curtailed I think they have been, upon the whole, extended. The Polynesian falls easily into despondency: bereavement, disappointment, the fear of novel visitations, the decay or proscription of ancient pleasures, easily incline him to be sad; and sadness detaches him from life. The melancholy of the Hawaiian and the emptiness of his new life alike are striking; and the remark is yet more apposite to the Marquesas. In Samoa, on the other hand, perpetual song and dance, perpetual games, journeys, and pleasures, make an animated and a smiling picture of the island life. And the Samoans are to-day the gayest and the best entertained inhabitants of our planet. The importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated. In a climate and upon a soil where a livelihood can be had for the stooping, entertainment is a prime necessity. It is otherwise with us, where life presents us with a daily problem, and there is a serious interest, and some of the heat of con-

Digitized by Google

flict, in the mere continuing to be. So, in certain atolls, where there is no great gaiety, but man must bestir himself with some vigour for his daily bread, public health and the population are maintained; but in the Lotos islands, with the decay of pleasures, life itself decays. It is from this point of view that we may instance, among other causes of depression, the decay of war. We have been so long used in Europe to that dreary business of war on the great scale, trailing epidemics and leaving pestilential corpses in its train, that we have almost forgotten its original, the most healthful, if not the most humane, of all field sports—hedge-warfare. From this, as well as from the rest of his amusements and interests, the islander, upon a hundred islands, has been recently cut off. And to this, as well as to so many others, the Samoan still makes good a special title.

Upon the whole, the problem seems to me to stand thus:—Where there have been fewest changes, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there the race survives. Where there have been most, important or unimportant, salutary or hurtful, there it perishes. Each change, however small, augments the sum of new conditions to which the race has to become inured. There may seem, *a priori*, no comparison between the change from "sour toddy" to bad gin, and that from the island kilt to a pair of European trousers. Yet I am far from persuaded

Digitized by Google

that the one is any more hurtful than the other; and the unaccustomed race will sometimes die of pin-pricks. We are here face to face with one of the difficulties of the missionary. In Polynesian islands he easily obtains pre-eminent authority; the king becomes his *mairedupalais;* he can proscribe, he can command; and the temptation is ever towards too much. Thus (by all accounts) the Catholics in Mangareva, and thus (to my own knowledge) the Protestants in Hawaii, have rendered life in a more or less degree unliveable to their converts. And the mild, uncomplaining creatures (like children in a prison) yawn and await death. It is easy to blame the missionary. But it is his business to make changes. It is surely his business, for example, to prevent war; and yet I have instanced war itself as one of the elements of health. On the other hand, it were, perhaps, easy for the missionary to proceed more gently, and to regard every change as an affair of weight. I take the average missionary; I am sure I do him no more than justice when I suppose that he would hesitate to bombard a village, even in order to convert an archipelago. Experience begins to show us (at least in Polynesian islands) that change of habit is bloodier than a bombardment.

There is one point, ere I have done, where I may go to meet criticism. I have said nothing of faulty hygiene, bathing during fevers, mistaken treatment of children, native doctoring,

Digitized by Google

or abortion—all causes frequently adduced. And I have said nothing of them because they are conditions common to both epochs, and even more efficient in the past than in the present. Was it not the same with unchastity, it may be asked? Was not the Polynesian always unchaste? Doubtless he was so always: doubtless he is more so since the coming of his remarkably chaste visitors from Europe. Take the Hawaiian account of Cook: I have no doubt it is entirely fair. Take Krusenstern's candid, almost innocent, description of a Russian man-of-war at the Marquesas; consider the disgraceful history of missions in Hawaii itself, where (in the war of lust) the American missionaries were once shelled by an English adventurer and once raided and mishandled by the crew of an American warship; add the practice of whaling fleets to call at the Marquesas, and carry off a complement of women for the cruise; consider, besides, how the whites were at first regarded in the light of demigods, as appears plainly in the reception of Cook upon Hawaii; and again, in the story of the discovery of Tutuila, when the really decent women of Samoa prostituted themselves in public to the French; and bear in mind how it was the custom of the adventurers, and we may almost say the business of the missionaries, to deride and infract even the most salutary tapus. Here we see every engine of dissolution directed at once against a virtue never and nowhere very

Digitized by Google

strong or popular; and the result, even in the most degraded islands, has been further degradation. Mr. Lawes, the missionary of Savage Island, told me the standard of female chastity had declined there since the coming of the whites. In heathen time, if a girl gave birth to a bastard, her father or brother would dash the infant down the cliffs; and to-day the scandal would be small. Or take the Marquesas. Stanislao Moanatini told me that in his own recollection, the young were strictly guarded; they were not suffered so much as to look upon one another in the street, but passed (so my informant put it) like dogs; and the other day the whole school-children of Nuka-hiva and Ua-pu escaped in a body to the woods, and lived there for a fortnight in promiscuous liberty. Readers of travels may perhaps exclaim at my authority, and declare themselves better informed. I should prefer the statement of an intelligent native like Stanislao (even if it stood alone, which it is far from doing) to the report of the most honest traveller. A ship of war comes to a haven, anchors, lands a party, receives and returns a visit, and the captain writes a chapter on the manners of the island. It is not considered what class is mostly seen. Yet we should not be pleased if a Lascar foremast hand were to judge England by the ladies who parade Ratcliffe Highway, and the gentlemen who share with them their hire. Stanislao's opinion of a decay of virtue even in these

Digitized by Google

unvirtuous islands has been supported to me by others; his very example, the progress of dissolution amongst the young, is adduced by Mr. Bishop in Hawaii. And so far as Marquesans are concerned we might have hazarded a guess of some decline in manners. I do not think that any race could ever have prospered or multiplied with such as now obtain; I am sure they would have been never at the pains to count paternal kinship. It is not possible to give details; suffice it that their manners appear to be imitated from the dreams of ignorant and vicious children, and their debauches persevered in until energy, reason, and almost life itself are in abeyance.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

CHIEFS AND TAPUS

WE used to admire exceedingly the bland and gallant manners of the chief called Taipi-Kikino. An elegant guest at table, skilled in the use of knife and fork, a brave figure when he shouldered a gun and started for the woods after wild chickens, always serviceable, always ingratiating and gay, I would sometimes wonder where he found his cheerfulness. He had enough to sober him, I thought, in his official budget. His expenses—for he was always seen attired in virgin white—must have by far exceeded his income of six dollars in the year, or say two shillings a month. And he was himself a man of no substance; his house the poorest in the village. It was currently supposed that his elder brother, Kauanui, must have helped him out. But how comes it that the elder brother should succeed to the family estate and be a wealthy commoner, and the younger be a poor man, and yet rule as chief in Anaho? That the one should be wealthy and the other almost indigent is probably to be explained by some adoption; for comparatively

Digitized by Google

few children are brought up in the house or succeed to the estates of their natural begetters. That the one should be chief instead of the other must be explained (in a very Irish fashion) on the ground that neither of them is a chief at all.

Since the return and the wars of the French, many chiefs have been deposed, and many so-called chiefs appointed. We have seen, in the same house, one such upstart drinking in the company of two such extruded island Bourbons, men, whose word a few years ago was life and death, now sunk to be peasants like their neighbours. So when the French overthrew hereditary tyrants, dubbed the commons of the Marquesas free-born citizens of the republic, and endowed them with a vote for a *conseiller-général* at Tahiti, they probably conceived themselves upon the path to popularity; and so far from that, they were revolting public sentiment. The deposition of the chiefs was perhaps sometimes needful; the appointment of others may have been needful also; it was at least a delicate business. The Government of George II. exiled many Highland magnates. It never occurred to them to manufacture substitutes; and if the French have been more bold, we have yet to see with what success.

Our chief at Anaho was always called, he always called himself, Taipi-Kikino; and yet that was not his name, but only the wand of his false position. As soon as he was appointed chief,

Digitized by Google

his name—which signified, if I remember exactly, *Prince born among flowers*—fell in abeyance, and he was dubbed instead by the expressive byword, Taipi-Kikino—*Highwater man-of-no-account*—or, Englishing more boldly, *Beggar on horseback*—a witty and a wicked cut. A nickname in Polynesia destroys almost the memory of the original name. To-day, if we were Polynesians, Gladstone would be no more heard of. We should speak of and address our Nestor as the Grand Old Man, and it is so that himself would sign his correspondence. Not the prevalence, then, but the significancy of the nickname is to be noted here. The new authority began with small prestige. Taipi has now been some time in office; from all I saw he seemed a person very fit. He is not the least unpopular, and yet his power is nothing. He is a chief to the French, and goes to breakfast with the Resident; but for any practical end of chieftaincy a rag doll were equally efficient.

We had been but three days in Anaho when we received the visit of the chief of Hatiheu, a man of weight and fame, late leader of a war upon the French, late prisoner in Tahiti, and the last eater of long-pig in Nuka-hiva. Not many years have elapsed since he was seen striding on the beach of Anaho, a dead man's arm across his shoulder. "So does Kooamua to his enemies!" he roared to the passers-by, and took a bite from the raw flesh. And now behold this gentle-

Digitized by Google

man, very wisely replaced in office by the French, paying us a morning visit in European clothes. He was the man of the most character we had yet seen: his manners genial and decisive, his person tall, his face rugged, astute, formidable, and with a certain similarity to Mr. Gladstone's —only for the brownness of the skin, and the high-chief's tattooing all one side, and much of the other being of an even blue. Further acquaintance increased our opinion of his sense. He viewed the *Casco* in a manner then quite new to us, examining her lines and the running of the gear; to a piece of knitting on which one of the party was engaged, he must have devoted ten minutes' patient study; nor did he desist before he had divined the principles; and he was interested even to excitement by a type-writer, which he learned to work. When he departed he carried away with him a list of his family, with his own name printed by his own hand at the bottom. I should add that he was plainly much of a humourist, and not a little of a humbug. He told us, for instance, that he was a person of exact sobriety; such being the obligation of his high estate: the commons might be sots, but the chief could not stoop so low. And not many days after he was to be observed in a state of smiling and lop-sided imbecility, the *Casco* ribbon upside down on his dishonoured hat.

But his business that morning in Anaho is what concerns us here. The devil-fish, it seems,

Digitized by Google

were growing scarce upon the reef; it was judged fit to interpose what we should call a close season, for that end, in Polynesia, a tapu (vulgarly spelt "taboo") has to be declared, and who was to declare it? Taipi might; he ought; it was a chief part of his duty; but would any one regard the inhibition of a Beggar on Horseback? He might plant palm branches: it did not in the least follow that the spot was sacred. He might recite the spell: it was shrewdly supposed the spirits would not hearken. And the old, legitimate cannibal must ride over the mountains to do it for him; and the respectable official in white clothes could but look on and envy. At about the same time, though in a different manner, Kooamua established a forest law. It was observed the cocoa palms were suffering, for the plucking of green nuts impoverishes and at last endangers the tree. Now Kooamua could tapu the reef, which was public property, but he could not tapu other people's palms; and the expedient adopted was interesting. He tapu'd his own trees, and his example was imitated over all Hatiheu and Anaho. I fear Taipi might have tapu'd all that he possessed and found none to follow him. So much for the esteem in which the dignity of an appointed chief is held by others; a single circumstance will show what he thinks of it himself. I never met one but he took an early opportunity to explain his situation. True, he was only an appointed chief

Digitized by Google

when I beheld him; but somewhere else, perhaps upon some other isle, he was a chieftain by descent: upon which ground, he asked me (so to say it) to excuse his mushroom honours.

It will be observed with surprise that both these tapus are for thoroughly sensible ends. With surprise, I say, because the nature of that institution is much misunderstood in Europe. It is taken usually in the sense of a meaningless or wanton prohibition, such as that which to-day prevents women in some countries from smoking, or yesterday prevented any one in Scotland from taking a walk on Sunday. The error is no less natural than it is unjust. The Polynesians have not been trained in the bracing, practical thought of ancient Rome; with them the idea of law has not been disengaged from that of morals or propriety; so that tapu has to cover the whole field, and implies indifferently that an act is criminal, immoral, against sound public policy, unbecoming or (as we say) "not in good form." Many tapus were in consequence absurd enough, such as those which deleted words out of the language, and particularly those which related to women. Tapu encircled women upon all hands. Many things were forbidden to men; to women we may say that few were permitted. They must not sit on the paepae; they must not go up to it by the stair; they must not eat pork; they must not approach a boat; they must not cook at a fire which any male had kindled. The other day,

Digitized by Google

after the roads were made, it was observed the women plunged along the margin through the bush, and when they came to a bridge waded through the water: roads and bridges were the work of men's hands, and tapu for the foot of women. Even a man's saddle, if the man be native, is a thing no self-respecting lady dares to use. Thus on the Anaho side of the island, only two white men, Mr. Regler and the gendarme, M. Aussel, possess saddles; and when a woman has a journey to make she must borrow from one or other. It will be noticed that these prohibitions tend, most of them, to an increased reserve between the sexes. Regard for female chastity is the usual excuse for these disabilities that men delight to lay upon their wives and mothers. Here the regard is absent; and behold the women still bound hand and foot with meaningless proprieties! The women themselves, who are survivors of the old regimen, admit that in those days life was not worth living. And yet even then there were exceptions. There were female chiefs and (I am assured) priestesses besides; nice customs curtseyed to great dames, and in the most sacred enclosure of a High Place, Father Siméon Delwar was shown a stone, and told it was the throne of some well-descended lady. How exactly parallel is this with European practice, when princesses were suffered to penetrate the strictest cloister and women could rule over a land in which they were denied the control of their own children.

Digitized by Google

But the tapu is more often the instrument of wise and needful restrictions. We have seen it as the organ of paternal government. It serves besides to enforce, in the rare case of some one wishing to enforce them, rights of private property. Thus a man, weary of the coming and going of Marquesan visitors, tapus his door; and to this day you may see the palm-branch signal, even as our great-grandfathers saw the peeled wand before a Highland inn. Or take another case. Anaho is known as "the country without popoi." The word popoi serves in different islands to indicate the main food of the people: thus, in Hawaii it implies a preparation of taro; in the Marquesas, of breadfruit. And a Marquesan does not readily conceive life possible without his favourite diet. A few years ago a drought killed the breadfruit trees and the bananas in the district of Anaho; and from this calamity, and the open-handed customs of the island, a singular state of things arose. Well-watered Hatiheu had escaped the drought; every householder of Anaho accordingly crossed the pass, chose some one in Hatiheu, "gave him his name" —an onerous gift, but one not to be rejected— and from this improvised relative proceeded to draw his supplies, for all the world as though he had paid for them. Hence a continued traffic on the road. Some stalwart fellow, in a loin-cloth, and glistening with sweat, may be seen at all hours of the day, a stick across his bare shoul-

Digitized by Google

ders, tripping nervously under a double burthen of green fruits. And on the far side of the gap a dozen stone posts on the wayside in the shadow of a grove mark the breathing-place of the popoi-carriers. A little back from the beach, and not half a mile from Anaho, I was the more amazed to find a cluster of well-doing breadfruits heavy with their harvest. "Why do you not take these?" I asked. "Tapu," said Hoka; and I thought to myself (after the manner of dull travellers) what children and fools these people were to toil over the mountain and despoil innocent neighbours when the staff of life was thus growing at their door. I was the more in error. In the general destruction these surviving trees were enough only for the family of the proprietor, and by the simple expedient of declaring a tapu he enforced his right.

The sanction of the tapu is superstitious; and the punishment of infraction either a wasting or a deadly sickness. A slow disease follows on the eating of tapu fish, and can only be cured with the bones of the same fish burned with the due mysteries. The cocoa-nut and breadfruit tapu works more swiftly. Suppose you have eaten tapu fruit at the evening meal, at night your sleep will be uneasy; in the morning, swelling and a dark discoloration will have attacked your neck, whence they spread upward to the face; and in two days, unless the cure be interjected, you must die. This cure is prepared from the

Digitized by Google

rubbed leaves of the tree from which the patient stole; so that he cannot be saved without confessing to the Tahuku the person whom he wronged. In the experience of my informant, almost no tapu had been put in use, except the two described: he had thus no opportunity to learn the nature and operation of the others; and, as the art of making them was jealously guarded amongst the old men, he believed the mystery would soon die out. I should add that he was no Marquesan, but a Chinaman, a resident in the group from boyhood, and a reverent believer in the spells which he described. White men, amongst whom Ah Fu included himself, were exempt; but he had a tale of a Tahitian woman who had come to the Marquesas, eaten tapu fish, and, although uninformed of her offence and danger, had been afflicted and cured exactly like a native.

Doubtless the belief is strong; doubtless, with this weakly and fanciful race, it is in many cases strong enough to kill; it should be strong indeed in those who tapu their trees secretly, so that they may detect a depredator by his sickness. Or, perhaps we should understand the idea of the hidden tapu otherwise, as a politic device to spread uneasiness and extort confessions: so that, when a man is ailing, he shall ransack his brain for any possible offence, and send at once for any proprietor whose rights he has invaded. "Had you hidden a tapu?" we may conceive him ask-

Digitized by Google

ing; and I cannot imagine the proprietor gainsaying it; and this is perhaps the strangest feature of the system—that it should be regarded from without with such a mental and implicit awe, and, when examined from within, should present so many apparent evidences of design.

We read in Dr. Campbell's *Poenamo* of a New Zealand girl who was foolishly told that she had eaten a tapu yam, and who instantly sickened, and died in the two days, of simple terror. The period is the same as in the Marquesas; doubtless the symptoms were so too. How singular to consider that a superstition of such sway is possibly a manufactured article; and that, even if it were not originally invented, its details have plainly been arranged by the authorities of some Polynesian Scotland Yard. Fitly enough, the belief is to-day—and was probably always—far from universal. Hell at home is a strong deterrent with some; a passing thought with others; with others, again, a theme of public mockery, not always well assured; and so in the Marquesas with the tapu. Mr. Regler had seen the two extremes of scepticism and implicit fear. In the tapu grove he found one fellow stealing breadfruit, cheerful and impudent as a street arab; and it was only on a menace of exposure that he showed himself the least discountenanced. The other case was opposed in every point. Mr. Regler asked a native to accompany him upon a voyage; the man went gladly enough, but sud-

Digitized by Google

denly perceiving a dead tapu fish in the bottom of the boat, leaped back with a scream; nor could the promise of a dollar prevail upon him to advance.

The Marquesan, it will be observed, adheres to the old idea of the local circumspection of beliefs and duties. Not only are the whites exempt from consequence; but their transgressions seem to be viewed without horror. It was Mr. Regler who had killed the fish; yet the devout native was not shocked at Mr. Regler—only refused to join him in his boat. A white is a white: the servant (so to speak) of other and more liberal gods; and not to be blamed if he profit by his liberty. The Jews were perhaps the first to interrupt this ancient comity of faiths; and the Jewish virus is still strong in Christianity. All the world must respect our tapus, or we gnash our teeth.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

HATIHEU

THE bays of Anaho and Hatiheu are divided at their roots by the knife-edge of a single hill—the pass so often mentioned; but this isthmus expands to the seaward in a considerable peninsula: very bare and grassy; haunted by sheep and, at night and morning, by the piercing cries of the shepherds; wandered over by a few wild goats; and on its sea-front indented with long, clamorous caves, and faced with cliffs of the colour and ruinous outline of an old peat-stack. In one of these echoing and sunless gullies we saw, clustered like sea-birds on a splashing ledge, shrill as sea-birds in their salutation to the passing boat, a group of fisher-women, stripped to their gaudy under-clothes. The clash of the surf and the thin female voices echo in my memory. We had that day a native crew and steersman, Kauanui; it was our first experience of Polynesian seamanship, which consists in hugging every point of land. There is no thought in this of saving time, for they will pull a long way in to skirt a point that is em-

Digitized by Google

bayed. It seems that, as they can never get their houses near enough the surf upon the one side, so they can never get their boats near enough upon the other. The practice in bold water is not so dangerous as it looks—the reflex from the rocks sending the boat off. Near beaches with a heavy run of sea, I continue to think it very hazardous, and find the composure of the natives annoying to behold. We took unmingled pleasure, on the way out, to see so near at hand the beach and the wonderful colours of the surf. On the way back, when the sea had risen and was running strong against us, the fineness of the steersman's aim grew more embarrassing. As we came abreast of the sea-front, where the surf broke highest, Kauanui embraced the occasion to light his pipe, which then made the circuit of the boat—each man taking a whiff or two, and, ere he passed it on, filling his lungs and cheeks with smoke. Their faces were all puffed out like apples as we came abreast of the cliff foot, and the bursting surge fell back into the boat in showers. At the next point "cocanetti" was the word, and the stroke borrowed my knife, and desisted from his labours to open nuts. These untimely indulgences may be compared to the tot of grog served out before a ship goes into action.

My purpose in this visit led me first to the boys' school, for Hatiheu is the university of the north islands. The hum of the lesson came

Digitized by Google

out to meet us. Close by the door, where the draught blew coolest, sat the lay brother; around him, in a packed half-circle, some sixty high-coloured faces set with staring eyes; and in the background of the barn-like room benches were to be seen, and blackboards with sums on them in chalk. The brother rose to greet us, sensibly humble. Thirty years he had been there, he said, and fingered his white locks as a bashful child pulls out his pinafore. "*Et point de résultats, monsieur, presque pas de résultats.*" He pointed to the scholars: "You see, sir, all the youth of Nuka-hiva and Ua-pu. Between the ages of six and fifteen this is all that remains; and it is but a few years since we had a hundred and twenty from Nuka-hiva alone. *Oui, monsieur, cela se dépérit.*" Prayers, and reading and writing, prayers again and arithmetic, and more prayers to conclude: such appeared to be the dreary nature of the course. For arithmetic all island people have a natural taste. In Hawaii they make good progress in mathematics. In one of the villages on Majuro, and generally in the Marshall group, the whole population sit about the trader when he is weighing copra, and each on his own slate takes down the figures and computes the total. The trader, finding them so apt, introduced fractions, for which they had been taught no rule. At first they were quite gravelled, but ultimately, by sheer hard thinking, reasoned out the result, and came one

Digitized by Google

after another to assure the trader he was right. Not many people in Europe could have done the like. The course at Hatiheu is therefore less dispiriting to Polynesians than a stranger might have guessed; and yet how bald it is at best! I asked the brother if he did not tell them stories, and he stared at me; if he did not teach them history, and he said, "O yes, they had a little Scripture history—from the New Testament"; and repeated his lamentations over the lack of results. I had not the heart to put more questions; I could but say it must be very discouraging, and resist the impulse to add that it seemed also very natural. He looked up—"My days are far spent," he said; "heaven awaits me." May that heaven forgive me, but I was angry with the old man and his simple consolation. For think of his opportunity! The youth, from six to fifteen, are taken from their homes by Government, centralised at Hatiheu, where they are supported by a weekly tax of food; and with the exception of one month in every year, surrendered wholly to the direction of the priests. Since the escapade already mentioned the holiday occurs at a different period for the girls and for the boys; so that a Marquesan brother and sister meet again, after their education is complete, a pair of strangers. It is a harsh law, and highly unpopular; but what a power it places in the hands of the instructors, and how languidly and dully is that power employed by

Digitized by Google

the mission! Too much concern to make the natives pious, a design in which they all confess defeat, is, I suppose, the explanation of their miserable system. But they might see in the girls' school at Tai-o-hae, under the brisk, housewifely sisters, a different picture of efficiency, and a scene of neatness, airiness, and spirited and mirthful occupation that should shame them into cheerier methods. The sisters themselves lament their failure. They complain the annual holiday undoes the whole year's work; they complain particularly of the heartless indifference of the girls. Out of so many pretty and apparently affectionate pupils whom they have taught and reared, only two have ever returned to pay a visit of remembrance to their teachers. These, indeed, come regularly, but the rest, so soon as their school days are over, disappear into the woods like captive insects. It is hard to imagine anything more discouraging; and yet I do not believe these ladies need despair. For a certain interval they keep the girls alive and innocently busy; and if it be at all possible to save the race, this would be the means. No such praise can be given to the boys' school at Hatiheu. The day is numbered already for them all; alike for the teacher and the scholars death is girt; he is afoot upon the march; and in the frequent interval they sit and yawn. But in life there seems a thread of purpose through the least significant; the drowsiest endeavour

Digitized by Google

is not lost, and even the school at Hatiheu may be more useful than it seems.

Hatiheu is a place of some pretensions. The end of the bay towards Anaho may be called the civil compound, for it boasts the house of Kooamua, and close on the beach, under a great tree, that of the gendarme, M. Armand Aussel, with his garden, his pictures, his books, and his excellent table, to which strangers are made welcome. No more singular contrast possible than between the gendarmerie and the priesthood, who are besides in smouldering opposition and full of mutual complaints. A priest's kitchen in the eastern islands is a depressing spot to see; and many, or most of them, make no attempt to keep a garden, sparsely subsisting on their rations. But you will never dine with a gendarme without smacking your lips; and M. Aussel's home-made sausage and the salad from his garden are unforgotten delicacies. Pierre Loti may like to know that he is M. Aussel's favourite author, and that his books are read in the fit scenery of Hatiheu bay.

The other end is all religious. It is here that an overhanging and tip-tilted horn, a good seamark for Hatiheu, bursts naked from the verdure of the climbing forest, and breaks down shoreward in steep taluses and cliffs. From the edge of one of the highest, perhaps seven hundred or a thousand feet above the beach, a Virgin looks insignificantly down, like a poor lost doll,

Digitized by Google

forgotten there by a giant child. This laborious symbol of the Catholics is always strange to Protestants; we conceive with wonder that men should think it worth while to toil so many days, and clamber so much about the face of precipices, for an end that makes us smile; and yet I believe it was the wise Bishop Dordillon who chose the place, and I know that those who had a hand in the enterprise look back with pride upon its vanquished dangers. The boys' school is a recent importation; it was at first in Tai-o-hae, beside the girls'; and it was only of late, after their joint escapade, that the width of the island was interposed between the sexes. But Hatiheu must have been a place of missionary importance from before. About midway of the beach no less than three churches stand grouped in a patch of bananas, intermingled with some pine-apples. Two are of wood: the original church, now in disuse; and a second that, for some mysterious reason, has never been used. The new church is of stone, with twin towers, walls flangeing into buttresses, and sculptured front. The design itself is good, simple, and shapely; but the character is all in the detail, where the architect has bloomed into the sculptor. It is impossible to tell in words of the angels (although they are more like winged archbishops) that stand guard upon the door, of the cherubs in the corners, of the scapegoat gargoyles, or the quaint and spirited relief, where Michael (the artist's

Digitized by Google

patron) makes short work of a protesting Lucifer. We were never weary of viewing the imagery, so innocent, sometimes so funny, and yet in the best sense—in the sense of inventive gusto and expression—so artistic. I know not whether it was more strange to find a building of such merit in a corner of a barbarous isle, or to see a building so antique still bright with novelty. The architect, a French lay brother, still alive and well, and meditating fresh foundations, must have surely drawn his descent from a master-builder in the age of the cathedrals; and it was in looking on the church of Hatiheu that I seemed to perceive the secret charm of mediæval sculpture; that combination of the childish courage of the amateur, attempting all things, like the schoolboy on his slate, with the manly perseverance of the artist who does not know when he is conquered.

I had always afterwards a strong wish to meet the architect, Brother Michel; and one day, when I was talking with the Resident in Tai-o-hae (the chief port of the island), there were shown in to us an old, worn, purblind, ascetic-looking priest, and a lay brother, a type of all that is most sound in France, with a broad, clever, honest, humorous countenance, an eye very large and bright, and a strong and healthy body inclining to obesity. But that his blouse was black and his face shaven clean, you might pick such a man to-day, toiling cheerfully in his

Digitized by Google

own patch of vines, from half a dozen provinces of France; and yet he had always for me a haunting resemblance to an old kind friend of my boyhood, whom I name in case any of my readers should share with me that memory—Dr. Paul, of the West Kirk. Almost at the first word I was sure it was my architect, and in a moment we were deep in a discussion of Hatiheu church. Brother Michel spoke always of his labours with a twinkle of humour, underlying which it was possible to spy a serious pride, and the change from one to another was often very human and diverting. "*Et vos gargouilles moyen-âge,*" cried I; "*comme elles sont originales!*" "*N'est-ce pas? Elles sont bien drôles!*" he said, smiling broadly; and the next moment, with a sudden gravity: "*Cependant il y en a une qui a une patte de cassé; il faut que je voie cela.*" I asked if he had any model—a point we much discussed. "*Non,*" said he simply; "*c'est une église idéale.*" The relievo was his favourite performance, and very justly so. The angels at the door, he owned, he would like to destroy and replace. "*Ils n'ont pas de vie, ils manquent de vie. Vous devriez voir mon église à la Dominique; j'ai là une vierge qui est vraiment gentille.*" "Ah!" I cried, "they told me you had said you would never build another church, and I wrote in my journal I could not believe it." "*Oui, j'aimerais bien en faire une autre,*" he confessed, and smiled at the confession. An artist will understand how much I

Digitized by Google

was attracted by this conversation. There is no bond so near as a community in that unaffected interest and slightly shamefaced pride which mark the intelligent man enamoured of an art. He sees the limitations of his aim, the defects of his practice; he smiles to be so employed upon the shores of death, yet sees in his own devotion something worthy. Artists, if they had the same sense of humour with the Augurs, would smile like them on meeting, but the smile would not be scornful.

I had occasion to see much of this excellent man. He sailed with us from Tai-o-hae to Hiva-oa, a dead beat of ninety miles against a heavy sea. It was what is called a good passage, and a feather in the *Casco's* cap; but among the most miserable forty hours that any one of us had ever passed. We were swung and tossed together all that time like shot in a stage thunder-box. The mate was thrown down and had his head cut open; the captain was sick on deck; the cook sick in the galley. Of all our party only two sat down to dinner. I was one. I own that I felt wretchedly; and I can only say of the other, who professed to feel quite well, that she fled at an early moment from the table. It was in these circumstances that we skirted the windward shore of that indescribable island of Ua-pu; viewing with dizzy eyes the coves, the capes, the breakers, the climbing forests, and the inaccessible stone needles that surmount

Digitized by Google

the mountains. The place persists, in a dark corner of our memories, like a piece of the scenery of nightmares. The end of this distressful passage, where we were to land our passengers, was in a similar vein of roughness. The surf ran high on the beach at Taahauku; the boat broached-to and capsized; and all hands were submerged. Only the brother himself, who was well used to the experience, skipped ashore, by some miracle of agility, with scarce a sprinkling. Thenceforward, during our stay at Hiva-oa, he was our cicerone and patron; introducing us, taking us excursions, serving us in every way, and making himself daily more beloved.

Michel Blanc had been a carpenter by trade; had made money and retired, supposing his active days quite over; and it was only when he found idleness dangerous that he placed his capital and acquirements at the service of the mission. He became their carpenter, mason, architect, and engineer; added sculpture to his accomplishments, and was famous for his skill in gardening. He wore an enviable air of having found a port from life's contentions and lying there strongly anchored; went about his business with a jolly simplicity; complained of no lack of results—perhaps shyly thinking his own statuary result enough; and was altogether a pattern of the missionary layman.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

THE PORT OF ENTRY

THE port—the mart, the civil and religious capital of these rude islands—is called Tai-o-hae, and lies strung along the beach of a precipitous green bay in Nuka-hiva. It was midwinter when we came thither, and the weather was sultry, boisterous, and inconstant. Now the wind blew squally from the land down gaps of splintered precipice; now, between the sentinel islets of the entry, it came in gusts from seaward. Heavy and dark clouds impended on the summits; the rain roared and ceased; the scuppers of the mountain gushed; and the next day we would see the sides of the amphitheatre bearded with white falls. Along the beach the town shows a thin file of houses, mostly white, and all ensconced in the foliage of an avenue of green puraos; a pier gives access from the sea across the belt of breakers; to the eastward there stands, on a projecting bushy hill, the old fort which is now the calaboose, or prison; eastward still, alone in a garden, the Residency flies the colours of France. Just off Calaboose Hill, the

Digitized by Google

tiny Government schooner rides almost permanently at anchor, marks eight bells in the morning (there or thereabout) with the unfurling of her flag, and salutes the setting sun with the report of a musket.

Here dwell together, and share the comforts of a club (which may be enumerated as a billiard-board, absinthe, a map of the world on Mercator's projection, and one of the most agreeable verandahs in the tropics) a handful of whites of varying nationality, mostly French officials, German and Scottish merchant clerks, and the agents of the opium monopoly. There are besides three tavern-keepers, the shrewd Scot who runs the cotton gin-mill, two white ladies, and a sprinkling of people "on the beach"—a South Sea expression for which there is no exact equivalent. It is a pleasant society, and a hospitable. But one man, who was often to be seen seated on the logs at the pier-head, merits a word for the singularity of his history and appearance. Long ago, it seems, he fell in love with a native lady, a High Chiefess in Ua-pu. She, on being approached, declared she could never marry a man who was untattooed; it looked so naked; whereupon, with some greatness of soul, our hero put himself in the hands of the Tahukus, and with still greater, persevered until the process was complete. He had certainly to bear a great expense, for the Tahuku will not work without reward; and certainly exquisite pain. Kooa-

Digitized by Google

mua, high chief as he was, and one of the old school, was only part tattooed; he could not, he told us with lively pantomime, endure the torture to an end. Our enamoured countryman was more resolved; he was tattooed from head to foot in the most approved methods of the art; and at last presented himself before his mistress a new man. The fickle fair one could never behold him from that day except with laughter. For my part, I could never see the man without a kind of admiration; of him it might be said, if ever of any, that he had loved not wisely, but too well.

The Residency stands by itself, Calaboose Hill screening it from the fringe of town along the farther bay. The house is commodious, with wide verandahs; all day it stands open back and front, and the trade blows copiously over its bare floors. On a week day the garden offers a scene of most untropical animation, half a dozen convicts toiling there cheerfully with spade and barrow, and touching hats and smiling to the visitor like old attached family servants. On Sunday these are gone, and nothing to be seen but dogs of all ranks and sizes peacefully slumbering in the shady grounds; for the dogs of Tai-o-hae are very courtly-minded, and make the seat of Government their promenade and place of siesta. In front and beyond, a strip of green down loses itself in a low wood of many species of acacia; and deep in the wood a ruinous

Digitized by Google

wall encloses the cemetery of the Europeans. English and Scottish sleep there, and Scandinavians, and French *maîtres de manœuvres* and *maîtres ouvriers:* mingling alien dust. Back in the woods perhaps, the blackbird or (as they call him there) the island nightingale, will be singing home strains; and the ceaseless requiem of the surf hangs on the ear. I have never seen a resting-place more quiet; but it was a long thought how far these sleepers had all travelled, and from what diverse homes they had set forth, to lie here in the end together.

On the summit of its promontory hill, the calaboose stands all day with doors and window-shutters open to the trade. On my first visit a dog was the only guardian visible. He, indeed, rose with an attitude so menacing that I was glad to lay hands on an old barrel-hoop; and I think the weapon must have been familiar, for the champion instantly retreated, and as I wandered round the court and through the building, I could see him, with a couple of companions, humbly dodging me about the corners. The prisoners' dormitory was a spacious, airy room, devoid of any furniture; its whitewashed walls covered with inscriptions in Marquesan and rude drawings: one of the pier, not badly done; one of a murder; several of French soldiers in uniform. There was one legend in French: "*Je n'est*" (sic) "*pas le sou.*" From this noontide quietude it must not be supposed the prison was

Digitized by Google

untenanted; the calaboose at Tai-o-hae does a good business. But some of its occupants were gardening at the Residency, and the rest were probably at work upon the streets, as free as our scavengers at home, although not so industrious. On the approach of evening they would be called in like children from play; and the harbour-master (who is also the jailer) would go through the form of locking them up until six the next morning. Should a prisoner have any call in town, whether of pleasure or affairs, he has but to unhook the window-shutter; and if he is back again, and the shutter decently replaced, by the hour of call on the morrow, he may have met the harbour-master in the avenue, and there will be no complaint, far less any punishment. But this is not all. The charming French Resident, M. Delaruelle, carried me one day to the calaboose on an official visit. In the green court, a very ragged gentleman, his legs deformed with the island elephantiasis, saluted us smiling. "One of our political prisoners—an insurgent from Raiatea," said the Resident; and then to the jailer: "I thought I had ordered him a new pair of trousers." Meanwhile no other convict was to be seen—"*Eh bien*," said the Resident, "*où sont vos prisonniers?*" "*Monsieur le Résident*," replied the jailer, saluting with soldierly formality, "*comme c'est jour de fête, je les ai laissé aller à la chasse.*" They were all upon the mountains hunting goats! Presently we came to the

Digitized by Google

quarters of the women, likewise deserted—"*Où sont vos bonnes femmes?*" asked the Resident; and the jailer cheerfully responded: "*Je crois, Monsieur le Résident, qu'elles sont allées quelquepart faire une visite.*" It had been the design of M. Delaruelle, who was much in love with the whimsicalities of his small realm, to elicit something comical; but not even he expected anything so perfect as the last. To complete the picture of convict life in Tai-o-hae, it remains to be added that these criminals draw a salary as regularly as the President of the Republic. Ten sous a day is their hire. Thus they have money, food, shelter, clothing, and, I was about to write, their liberty. The French are certainly a good-natured people, and make easy masters. They are besides inclined to view the Marquesans with an eye of humorous indulgence. "They are dying, poor devils!" said M. Delaruelle; "the main thing is to let them die in peace." And it was not only well said, but I believe expressed the general thought. Yet there is another element to be considered; for these convicts are not merely useful, they are almost essential to the French existence. With a people incurably idle, dispirited by what can only be called endemic pestilence, and inflamed with ill-feeling against their new masters, crime and convict labour are a godsend to the Government.

Theft is practically the sole crime. Originally petty pilferers, the men of Tai-o-hae now begin

Digitized by Google

to force locks and attack strong-boxes. Hundreds of dollars have been taken at a time; though, with that redeeming moderation so common in Polynesian theft, the Marquesan burglar will always take a part and leave a part, sharing (so to speak) with the proprietor. If it be Chilian coin—the island currency—he will escape; if the sum is in gold, French silver, or bank-notes, the police wait until the money begins to come in circulation, and then easily pick out the man. And now comes the shameful part. In plain English, the prisoner is tortured until he confesses and (if that be possible) restores the money. To keep him alone, day and night, in the black hole, is to inflict on the Marquesan torture inexpressible. Even his robberies are carried on in the plain daylight, under the open sky, with the stimulus of enterprise, and the countenance of an accomplice; his terror of the dark is still insurmountable; conceive, then, what he endures in his solitary dungeon; conceive how he longs to confess, become a full-fledged convict, and be allowed to sleep beside his comrades. While we were in Tai-o-hae a thief was under prevention. He had entered a house about eight in the morning, forced a trunk, and stolen eleven hundred francs; and now, under the horrors of darkness, solitude, and a bedevilled cannibal imagination, he was reluctantly confessing and giving up his spoil. From one cache, which he had already pointed out,

Digitized by Google

three hundred francs had been recovered, and it was expected that he would presently disgorge the rest. This would be ugly enough if it were all; but I am bound to say, because it is a matter the French should set at rest, that worse is continually hinted. I heard that one man was kept six days with his arms bound backward round a barrel; and it is the universal report that every gendarme in the South Seas is equipped with something in the nature of a thumbscrew. I do not know this. I never had the face to ask any of the gendarmes—pleasant, intelligent, and kindly fellows—with whom I have been intimate, and whose hospitality I have enjoyed; and perhaps the tale reposes (as I hope it does) on a misconstruction of that ingenious cat's-cradle with which the French agent of police so readily secures a prisoner. But whether physical or moral, torture is certainly employed; and by a barbarous injustice the state of accusation (in which a man may very well be innocently placed) is positively painful; the state of conviction (in which all are supposed guilty) is comparatively free, and positively pleasant. Perhaps worse still,—not only the accused, but sometimes his wife, his mistress, or his friend, is subjected to the same hardships. I was admiring, in the tapu system, the ingenuity of native methods of detection; there is not much to admire in those of the French, and to lock up a timid child in a dark room, and, if he prove obstinate, lock

Digitized by Google

up his sister in the next, is neither novel nor humane.

The main occasion of these thefts is the new vice of opium-eating. "Here nobody ever works, and all eat opium," said a gendarme; and Ah Fu knew a woman who ate a dollar's worth in a day. The successful thief will give a handful of money to each of his friends, a dress to a woman, pass an evening in one of the taverns of Tai-o-hae, during which he treats all comers, produce a big lump of opium, and retire to the bush to eat and sleep it off. A trader, who did not sell opium, confessed to me that he was at his wit's end. "I do not sell it, but others do," said he. "The natives only work to buy it; if they walk over to me to sell their cotton, they have just to walk over to some one else to buy their opium with my money. And why should they be at the bother of two walks? There is no use talking," he added—"opium is the currency of this country."

The man under prevention during my stay at Tai-o-hae lost patience while the Chinese opium-seller was being examined in his presence. "Of course he sold me opium!" he broke out; "all the Chinese here sell opium. It was only to buy opium that I stole; it is only to buy opium that anybody steals. And what you ought to do is to let no opium come here, and no Chinamen." This is precisely what is done in Samoa by a native Government; but the French have

Digitized by Google

bound their own hands, and for forty thousand francs sold native subjects to crime and death. This horrid traffic may be said to have sprung up by accident. It was Captain Hart who had the misfortune to be the means of beginning it, at a time when his plantations flourished in the Marquesas, and he found a difficulty in keeping Chinese coolies. To-day the plantations are practically deserted and the Chinese gone; but in the meanwhile the natives have learned the vice, the patent brings in a round sum, and the needy Government at Papeete shut their eyes and open their pockets. Of course, the patentee is supposed to sell to Chinamen alone: equally of course, no one could afford to pay forty thousand francs for the privilege of supplying a scattered handful of Chinese; and every one knows the truth, and all are ashamed of it. French officials shake their heads when opium is mentioned; and the agents of the farmer blush for their employment. Those that live in glass houses should not throw stones; as a subject of the British crown, I am an unwilling shareholder in the largest opium business under heaven. But the British case is highly complicated; it implies the livelihood of millions; and must be reformed, when it can be reformed at all, with prudence. This French business, on the other hand, is a nostrum and a mere excrescence. No native industry was to be encouraged: the poison is solemnly imported. No native habit was to be

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

considered; the vice has been gratuitously introduced. And no creature profits, save the Government at Papeete—the not very enviable gentlemen who pay them, and the Chinese underlings who do the dirty work.

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER IX

THE HOUSE OF TEMOANA

THE history of the Marquesas is, of late years, much confused by the coming and going of the French. At least twice they have seized the archipelago, at least once deserted it; and in the meanwhile the natives pursued almost without interruption their desultory cannibal wars. Through these events and changing dynasties, a single considerable figure may be seen to move: that of the high chief, a king, Temoana. Odds and ends of his history came to my ears: how he was at first a convert of the Protestant mission; how he was kidnapped or exiled from his native land, served as cook aboard a whaler, and was shown, for small charge, in English seaports; how he returned at last to the Marquesas, fell under the strong and benign influence of the late bishop, extended his influence in the group, was for a while joint ruler with the prelate, and died at last the chief supporter of Catholicism and the French. His widow remains in receipt of two pounds a month from the French Government. Queen she is

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

usually called, but in the official almanac she figures as "*Madame Vaekehu, Grande Chefesse.*" His son (natural or adoptive, I know not which), Stanislao Moanatini, chief of Akaui, serves in Tai-o-hae as a kind of Minister of Public Works, and the daughter of Stanislao is High Chiefess of the southern island of Tauata. These, then, are the greatest folk of the archipelago; we thought them also the most estimable. This is the rule in Polynesia, with few exceptions; the higher the family, the better the man—better in sense, better in manners, and usually taller and stronger in body. A stranger advances blindfold. He scrapes acquaintance as he can. Save the tattoo in the Marquesas, nothing indicates the difference of rank; and yet almost invariably we found, after we had made them, that our friends were persons of station. I have said "usually taller and stronger." I might have been more absolute,—over all Polynesia, and a part of Micronesia, the rule holds good; the great ones of the isle, and even of the village, are greater of bone and muscle, and often heavier of flesh, than any commoner. The usual explanation—that the high-born child is more industriously shampooed, is probably the true one. In New Caledonia, at least, where the difference does not exist or has never been remarked, the practice of shampooing seems to be itself unknown. Doctors would be well employed in a study of the point.

Vaekehu lives at the other end of the town

Digitized by Google

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

from the Residency, beyond the buildings of the mission. Her house is on the European plan: a table in the midst of the chief room; photographs and religious pictures on the wall. It commands to either hand a charming vista: through the front door, a peep of green lawn, scurrying pigs, the pendent fans of the coco-palm and the splendour of the bursting surf: through the back, mounting forest glades and coronals of precipice. Here, in the strong thorough-draught, Her Majesty received us in a simple gown of print, and with no mark of royalty but the exquisite finish of her tattooed mittens, the elaboration of her manners, and the gentle falsetto in which all the highly refined among Marquesan ladies (and Vaekehu above all others) delight to sing their language. An adopted daughter interpreted, while we gave the news and rehearsed by name our friends of Anaho. As we talked, we could see, through the landward door, another lady of the household at her toilet under the green trees; who presently, when her hair was arranged, and her hat wreathed with flowers, appeared upon the back verandah with gracious salutations.

Vaekehu is very deaf; "*merci*" is her only word of French; and I do not know that she seemed clever. An exquisite, kind refinement, with a shade of quietism, gathered perhaps from the nuns, was what chiefly struck us. Or rather, upon that first occasion, we were conscious of a

Digitized by Google

sense of district-visiting on our part, and reduced evangelical gentility on the part of our hostess. The other impression followed after she was more at ease, and came with Stanislao and his little girl to dine on board the *Casco*. She had dressed for the occasion: wore white, which very well became her strong brown face; and sat among us, eating or smoking her cigarette, quite cut off from all society, or only now and then included through the intermediary of her son. It was a position that might have been ridiculous, and she made it ornamental; making believe to hear and to be entertained; her face, whenever she met our eyes, lighting with the smile of good society; her contributions to the talk, when she made any, and that was seldom, always complimentary and pleasing. No attention was paid to the child, for instance, but what she remarked and thanked us for. Her parting with each, when she came to leave, was gracious and pretty, as had been every step of her behaviour. When Mrs. Stevenson held out her hand to say good-bye, Vaekehu took it, held it, and a moment smiled upon her; dropped it, and then, as upon a kindly afterthought, and with a sort of warmth of condescension, held out both hands and kissed my wife upon both cheeks. Given the same relation of years and of rank, the thing would have been so done on the boards of the *Comédie Française;* just so might Madame Brohan have warmed

Digitized by Google

and condescended to Madame Broisat in the *Marquis de Villemer*. It was my part to accompany our guests ashore: when I kissed the little girl good-bye at the pier steps, Vaekehu gave a cry of gratification, reached down her hand into the boat, took mine, and pressed it with that flattering softness which seems the coquetry of the old lady in every quarter of the earth. The next moment she had taken Stanislao's arm, and they moved off along the pier in the moonlight, leaving me bewildered. This was a queen of cannibals; she was tattooed from hand to foot, and perhaps the greatest masterpiece of that art now extant, so that a while ago, before she was grown prim, her leg was one of the sights of Tai-o-hae; she had been passed from chief to chief; she had been fought for and taken in war; perhaps, being so great a lady, she had sat on the high place, and throned it there, alone of her sex, while the drums were going twenty strong and the priests carried up the bloodstained baskets of long-pig. And now behold her, out of that past of violence and sickening feasts, step forth, in her age, a quiet, smooth, elaborate old lady, such as you might find at home (mittened also, but not often so well mannered) in a score of country houses. Only Vaekehu's mittens were of dye, not of silk; and they had been paid for, not in money, but the cooked flesh of men. It came in my mind with a clap, what she could think of it herself, and whether at

Digitized by Google

heart, perhaps, she might not regret and aspire after the barbarous and stirring past. But when I asked Stanislao—"Ah!" said he, "she is content; she is religious, she passes all her days with the sisters."

Stanislao (Stanislaos, with the final consonant evaded after the Polynesian habit) was sent by Bishop Dordillon to South America, and there educated by the fathers. His French is fluent, his talk sensible and spirited, and in his capacity of hanger-in-chief, he is of excellent service to the French. With the prestige of his name and family, and with the stick when needful, he keeps the natives working and the roads passable. Without Stanislao and the convicts, I am in doubt what would become of the present regimen in Nuka-hiva; whether the highways might not be suffered to close up, the pier to wash away, and the Residency to fall piecemeal about the ears of impotent officials. And yet though the hereditary favourer, and one of the chief props of French authority, he has always an eye upon the past. He showed me where the old public place had stood, still to be traced by random piles of stone; told me how great and fine it was, and surrounded on all sides by populous houses, whence, at the beating of the drums, the folk crowded to make holiday. The drum-beat of the Polynesian has a strange and gloomy stimulation for the nerves of all. White persons feel it—at these precipitate sounds their hearts beat

Digitized by Google

faster; and, according to old residents, its effect on the natives was extreme. Bishop Dordillon might entreat; Temoana himself command and threaten; at the note of the drum wild instincts triumphed. And now it might beat upon these ruins, and who should assemble? The houses are down, the people dead, their lineage extinct; and the sweepings and fugitives of distant bays and islands encamp upon their graves. The decline of the dance Stanislao especially laments. "*Chaque pays a ses coutumes*," said he; but in the report of any gendarme, perhaps corruptly eager to increase the number of *délits* and the instruments of his own power, custom after custom is placed on the expurgatorial index. "*Tenez, une danse qui n'est pas permise*," said Stanislao: "*je ne sais pas pourquoi, elle est très jolie, elle va comme çà*," and sticking his umbrella upright in the road, he sketched the steps and gestures. All his criticisms of the present, all his regrets for the past, struck me as temperate and sensible. The short term of office of the Resident he thought the chief defect of the administration; that officer having scarce begun to be efficient ere he was recalled. I thought I gathered, too, that he regarded with some fear the coming change from a naval to a civil governor. I am sure at least that I regard it so myself; for the civil servants of France have never appeared to any foreigner as at all the flower of their country, while her naval officers may chal-

Digitized by Google

lenge competition with the world. In all his talk Stanislao was particular to speak of his own country as a land of savages; and when he stated an opinion of his own, it was with some apologetic preface, alleging that he was "a savage who had travelled." There was a deal, in this elaborate modesty, of honest pride. Yet there was something in the precaution that saddened me; and I could not but fear he was only forestalling a taunt that he had heard too often.

I recall with interest two interviews with Stanislao. The first was a certain afternoon of tropic rain, which we passed together in the verandah of the club; talking at times with heightened voices as the showers redoubled overhead, passing at times into the billiard-room, to consult, in the dim, cloudy daylight, that map of the world which forms its chief adornment. He was naturally ignorant of English history, so that I had much of news to communicate. The story of Gordon I told him in full, and many episodes of the Indian Mutiny, Lucknow, the second battle of Cawnpore, the relief of Arrah, the death of poor Spottiswoode, and Sir Hugh Rose's hotspur, midland campaign. He was intent to hear; his brown face, strongly marked with small-pox, kindled and changed with each vicissitude. His eyes glowed with the reflected light of battle; his questions were many and intelligent, and it was chiefly these that sent us so often to the map. But it is of our parting that I keep

Digitized by Google

the strongest sense. We were to sail on the morrow, and the night had fallen, dark, gusty, and rainy, when we stumbled up the hill to bid farewell to Stanislao. He had already loaded us with gifts; but more were waiting. We sat about the table over cigars and green cocoanuts; claps of wind blew through the house and extinguished the lamp, which was always instantly relighted with a single match; and these recurrent intervals of darkness were felt as a relief. For there was something painful and embarrassing in the kindness of that separation. "*Ah, vous devriez rester ici, mon cher ami!*" cried Stanislao. "*Vous êtes les gens qu'il faut pour les Kanaques; vous êtes doux, vous et votre famille; vous seriez obéis dans toutes les îles.*" We had been civil; not always that, my conscience told me, and never anything beyond; and all this to-do is a measure, not of our considerateness, but of the want of it in others. The rest of the evening, on to Vaekehu's and back as far as to the pier, Stanislao walked with my arm and sheltered me with his umbrella; and after the boat had put off, we could still distinguish, in the murky darkness, his gestures of farewell. His words, if there were any, were drowned by the rain and the loud surf.

I have mentioned presents, a vexed question in the South Seas; and one which well illustrates the common, ignorant habit of regarding races in a lump. In many quarters the Polynesian

Digitized by Google

gives only to receive. I have visited islands where the population mobbed me for all the world like dogs after the waggon of cat's-meat; and where the frequent proposition, "You my pleni (friend)," or (with more of pathos) "You all 'e same my father," must be received with hearty laughter and a shout. And perhaps everywhere, among the greedy and rapacious, a gift is regarded as a sprat to catch a whale. It is the habit to give gifts and to receive returns, and such characters, complying with the custom, will look to it nearly that they do not lose. But for persons of a different stamp the statement must be reversed. The shabby Polynesian is anxious till he has received the return gift; the generous is uneasy until he has made it. The first is disappointed if you have not given more than he; the second is miserable if he thinks he has given less than you. This is my experience; if it clash with that of others, I pity their fortune, and praise mine: the circumstance cannot change what I have seen, nor lessen what I have received. And indeed I find that those who oppose me often argue from a ground of singular presumptions; comparing Polynesians with an ideal person, compact of generosity and gratitude, whom I never had the pleasure of encountering; and forgetting that what is almost poverty to us is wealth almost unthinkable to them. I will give one instance: I chanced to speak with consideration of these gifts of Stanislao's with a

Digitized by Google

certain clever man, a great hater and contemner of Kanakas. "Well! what were they?" he cried. "A pack of old men's beards. Trash!" And the same gentleman, some half an hour later, being upon a different train of thought, dwelt at length on the esteem in which the Marquesans held that sort of property, how they preferred it to all others except land, and what fancy prices it would fetch. Using his own figures, I computed that, in this commodity alone, the gifts of Vaekehu and Stanislao represented between two and three hundred dollars; and the queen's official salary is of two hundred and forty in the year.

But generosity on the one hand, and conspicuous meanness on the other, are in the South Seas, as at home, the exception. It is neither with any hope of gain, nor with any lively wish to please, that the ordinary Polynesian chooses and presents his gifts. A plain social duty lies before him, which he performs correctly, but without the least enthusiasm. And we shall best understand his attitude of mind, if we examine our own to the cognate absurdity of marriage presents. There we give without any special thought of a return; yet if the circumstance arise, and the return be withheld, we shall judge ourselves insulted. We give them usually without affection, and almost never with a genuine desire to please; and our gift is rather a mark of our own status than a measure of our

Digitized by Google

love to the recipients. So in a great measure and with the common run of the Polynesians: their gifts are formal; they imply no more than social recognition; and they are made and reciprocated, as we pay and return our morning visits. And the practice of marking and measuring events and sentiments by presents is universal in the island world. A gift plays with them the part of stamp and seal; and has entered profoundly into the mind of islanders. Peace and war, marriage, adoption and naturalisation, are celebrated or declared by the acceptance or the refusal of gifts; and it is as natural for the islander to bring a gift as for us to carry a card-case.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

A PORTRAIT AND A STORY

I HAVE had occasion several times to name the late bishop, Father Dordillon, "Monseigneur," as he is still almost universally called, Vicar-Apostolic of the Marquesas and Bishop of Cambysopolis *in partibus*. Everywhere in the island, among all classes and races, this fine, old, kindly, cheerful fellow is remembered with affection and respect. His influence with the natives was paramount. They reckoned him the highest of men—higher than an admiral; brought him their money to keep; took his advice upon their purchases; nor would they plant trees upon their own land till they had the approval of the father of the islands. During the time of the French exodus he singly represented Europe, living in the Residency and ruling by the hand of Temoana. The first roads were made under his auspices and by his persuasion. The old road between Hatiheu and Anaho was got under way from either side on the ground that it would be pleasant for an evening promenade, and brought to completion by working on

Digitized by Google

the rivalry of the two villages. The priest would boast in Hatiheu of the progress made in Anaho, and he would tell the folk of Anaho, "If you don't take care, your neighbours will be over the hill before you are at the top." It could not be so done to-day; it could then; death, opium, and depopulation had not gone so far; and the people of Hatiheu, I was told, still vied with each other in fine attire, and used to go out by families, in the cool of the evening, boat-sailing and racing in the bay. There seems some truth at least in the common view, that this joint reign of Temoana and the bishop was the last and brief golden age of the Marquesas. But the civil power returned, the mission was packed out of the Residency at twenty-four hours' notice, new methods supervened, and the golden age (whatever it quite was) came to an end. It is the strongest proof of Father Dordillon's prestige that it survived, seemingly without loss, this hasty deposition.

His method with the natives was extremely mild. Among these barbarous children he still played the part of the smiling father; and he was careful to observe, in all indifferent matters, the Marquesan etiquette. Thus, in the singular system of artificial kinship, the bishop had been adopted by Vaekehu as a grandson; Miss Fisher, of Hatiheu, as a daughter. From that day, Monseigneur never addressed the young lady except as his mother, and closed his letters with

Digitized by Google

the formalities of a dutiful son. With Europeans he could be strict, even to the extent of harshness. He made no distinction against heretics, with whom he was on friendly terms; but the rules of his own Church he would see observed; and once at least he had a white man clapped in jail for the desecration of a saint's day. But even this rigour, so intolerable to laymen, so irritating to Protestants, could not shake his popularity. We shall best conceive him by examples nearer home; we may all have known some divine of the old school in Scotland, a liberal Sabbatarian, a stickler for the letter of the law, who was yet in private modest, innocent, genial, and mirthful. Much such a man, it seems, was Father Dordillon. And his popularity bore a test yet stronger. He had the name, and probably deserved it, of a shrewd man in business and one that made the mission pay. Nothing so much stirs up resentment as the inmixture in commerce of religious bodies; but even rival traders spoke well of Monseigneur.

His character is best portrayed in the story of the days of his decline. A time came when, from the failure of sight, he must desist from his literary labours; his Marquesan hymns, grammars, and dictionaries; his scientific papers, lives of saints, and devotional poetry. He cast about for a new interest; pitched on gardening, and was to be seen all day, with spade and waterpot, in his childlike eagerness, actually running

Digitized by Google

between the borders. Another step of decay, and he must leave his garden also. Instantly a new occupation was devised, and he sat in the mission cutting paper flowers and wreaths. His diocese was not great enough for his activity; the churches of the Marquesas were papered with his handiwork, and still he must be making more. "Ah," said he, smiling, "when I am dead what a fine time you will have clearing out my trash!" He had been dead about six months; but I was pleased to see some of his trophies still exposed, and looked upon them with a smile: the tribute (if I have read his cheerful character aright) which he would have preferred to any useless tears. Disease continued progressively to disable him; he who had clambered so stalwartly over the rude rocks of the Marquesas, bringing peace to warfaring clans, was for some time carried in a chair between the mission and the church, and at last confined to bed, impotent with dropsy, and tormented with bed-sores and sciatica. Here he lay two months without complaint; and on the 11th January, 1888, in the seventy-ninth year of his life, and the thirty-fourth of his labours in the Marquesas, passed away.

Those who have a taste for hearing missions, Protestant or Catholic, decried, must seek their pleasure elsewhere than in my pages. Whether Catholic or Protestant, with all their gross blots, with all their deficiency of candour, of humour,

Digitized by Google

and of common-sense, the missionaries are the best and the most useful whites in the Pacific. This is a subject which will follow us throughout; but there is one part of it that may conveniently be treated here. The married and the celibate missionary, each has his particular advantage and defect. The married missionary, taking him at the best, may offer to the native what he is much in want of—a higher picture of domestic life; but the woman at his elbow tends to keep him in touch with Europe and out of touch with Polynesia, and to perpetuate, and even to ingrain, parochial decencies far best forgotten. The mind of the female missionary tends, for instance, to be continually busied about dress. She can be taught with extreme difficulty to think any costume decent but that to which she grew accustomed on Clapham Common; and to gratify this prejudice, the native is put to useless expense, his mind is tainted with the morbidities of Europe, and his health is set in danger. The celibate missionary, on the other hand, and whether at best or worst, falls readily into native ways of life; to which he adds too commonly what is either a mark of celibate man at large, or an inheritance from mediæval saints—I mean slovenly habits and an unclean person. There are, of course, degrees in this; and the sister (of course, and all honour to her) is as fresh as a lady at a ball. For the diet there is nothing to be said—it must amaze and shock the Polynesian

Digitized by Google

—but for the adoption of native habits there is much. "*Chaque pays a ses coutumes*," said Stanislao; these it is the missionary's delicate task to modify; and the more he can do so from within, and from a native standpoint, the better he will do his work; and here I think the Catholics have sometimes the advantage; in the Vicariate of Dordillon, I am sure they had it. I have heard the bishop blamed for his indulgence to the natives, and above all because he did not rage with sufficient energy against cannibalism. It was a part of his policy to live among the natives like an elder brother; to follow where he could; to lead where it was necessary; never to drive; and to encourage the growth of new habits, instead of violently rooting up the old. And it might be better in the long-run, if this policy were always followed.

It might be supposed that native missionaries would prove more indulgent, but the reverse is found to be the case. The new broom sweeps clean; and the white missionary of to-day is often embarrassed by the bigotry of his native coadjutor. What else should we expect? On some island, sorcery, polygamy, human sacrifice, and tobacco-smoking have been prohibited, the dress of the native has been modified, and himself warned in strong terms against rival sects of Christianity; all by the same man, at the same period of time, and with the like authority. By what criterion is the convert to distinguish the

Digitized by Google

essential from the unessential? He swallows the nostrum whole; there has been no play of mind, no instruction, and, except for some brute utility in the prohibitions, no advance. To call things by their proper-names, this is teaching superstition. It is unfortunate to use the word; so few people have read history and so many have dipped into little atheistic manuals, that the majority will rush to a conclusion, and suppose the labour lost. And far from that: These semi-spontaneous superstitions, varying with the sect of the original evangelist and the customs of the island, are found in practice to be highly fructifying; and in particular those who have learned and who go forth again to teach them offer an example to the world. The best specimen of the Christian hero that I ever met was one of these native missionaries. He had saved two lives at the risk of his own; like Nathan, he had bearded a tyrant in his hour of blood; when a whole white population fled, he alone stood to his duty; and his behaviour under domestic sorrow with which the public has no concern filled the beholder with sympathy and admiration. A poor little smiling laborious man he looked; and you would have thought he had nothing in him but that of which indeed he had too much—facile good-nature.[1]

It chances that the only rivals of Monseigneur

[1]The reference is to Maka, the Hawaiian missionary, at Butaritar in the Gilberts.

Digitized by Google

and his mission in the Marquesas were certain of these brown-skinned evangelists, natives from Hawaii. I know not what they thought of Father Dordillon: they are the only class I did not question; but I suspect the prelate to have regarded them askance, for he was eminently human. During my stay at Tai-o-hae, the time of the yearly holiday came round at the girls' school; and a whole fleet of whale-boats came from Ua-pu to take the daughters of that island home. On board of these was Kauwealoha, one of the pastors, a fine, rugged old gentleman, of that leonine type so common in Hawaii. He paid me a visit in the *Casco*, and there entertained me with a tale of one of his colleagues, Kekela, a missionary in the great cannibal isle of Hiva-oa. It appears that shortly after a kidnapping visit from a Peruvian slaver, the boats of an American whaler put into a bay upon that island, were attacked, and made their escape with difficulty, leaving their mate, a Mr. Whalon, in the hands of the natives. The captive, with his arms bound behind his back, was cast into a house; and the chief announced the capture to Kekela. And here I begin to follow the version of Kauwealoha; it is a good specimen of Kanaka English; and the reader is to conceive it delivered with violent emphasis and speaking pantomime.

"'I got 'Melican mate,' the chief he say. 'What you go do 'Melican mate?' Kekela he say.

Digitized by Google

'I go make fire, I go kill, I go eat him,' he say; 'you come to-mollow eat piece.' 'I no *want* eat 'Melican mate!' Kekela he say; 'why you want?' 'This bad shippee, this slave shippee,' the chief he say. 'One time a shippee he come from Pelu, he take away plenty Kanaka, he take away my son. 'Melican mate he bad man. I go eat him; you eat piece.' 'I no *want* eat 'Melican mate!' Kekela he say; and he *cly*—all night he cly! To-mollow Kekela he get up, he put on blackee coat, he go see chief; he see Missa Whela, him hand tie' like this. (*Pantomime.*) Kekela he cly. He say chief:—'Chief, you like things of mine? you like whale-boat?' 'Yes,' he say. 'You like file-a'm?' (fire-arms). 'Yes,' he say. 'You like blackee coat?' 'Yes,' he say. Kekela he take Missa Whela by he shoul'a' (shoulder), he take him light out house; he give chief he whale-boat, he file-a'm, he blackee coat. He take Missa Whela he house, make him sit down with he wife and chil'en. Missa Whela all-the-same pelison (prison); he wife, he chil'en in Amelica; he cly—O, he cly. Kekela he solly. One day Kekela he see ship. (*Pantomime.*) He say Missa Whela, 'Ma' Whala?' Missa Whela he say, 'Yes.' Kanaka they begin go down beach: Kekela he get eleven Kanaka, get oa' (oars), get evely thing. He say Missa Whela, 'Now you go quick.' They jump in whale-boat. 'Now you low!' Kekela he say: 'you low quick, quick!' (*Violent pantomime, and a change in-*

Digitized by Google

dicating that the narrator has left the boat and returned to the beach.) All the Kanaka they say, 'How! 'Melican mate he go away?'—jump in boat; low afta. (*Violent pantomime and change again to boat.*) Kekela he say, 'Low quick!'"

Here I think Kauwealoha's pantomime had confused me; I have no more of his *ipsissima verba;* and can but add, in my own less spirited manner, that the ship was reached, Mr. Whalon taken aboard, and Kekela returned to his charge among the cannibals. But how unjust it is to repeat the stumblings of a foreigner in a language only partly acquired! A thoughtless reader might conceive Kauwealoha and his colleague to be a species of amicable baboon; but I have here the antidote. In return for his act of gallant charity, Kekela was presented by the American Government with a sum of money, and by President Lincoln personally with a gold watch. From his letter of thanks, written in his own tongue, I give the following extract. I do not envy the man who can read it without emotion.

When I saw one of your countrymen, a citizen of your great nation, ill-treated, and about to be baked and eaten, as a pig is eaten, I ran to save him, full of pity and grief at the evil deed of these benighted people. I gave my boat for the stranger's life. This boat came from James Hunnewell, a gift of friendship. It became the ransom of this countryman of yours, that he might not be eaten by the savages

Digitized by Google

who knew not Jehovah. This was Mr. Whalon, and the date, Jan. 14, 1864.

As to this friendly deed of mine in saving Mr. Whalon, its seed came from your great land, and was brought by certain of your countrymen, who had received the love of God. It was planted in Hawaii, and I brought it to plant in this land and in these dark regions, that they might receive the root of all that is good and true, which is *love*.

1. Love to Jehovah.
2. Love to self.
3. Love to our neighbour.

If a man have a sufficiency of these three, he is good and holy, like his God, Jehovah, in his triune character (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), one-three, three-one. If he have two and wants one, it is not well; and if he have one and wants two, this, indeed, is not well; but if he cherishes all three, then is he holy, indeed, after the manner of the Bible.

This is a great thing for your great nation to boast of, before all the nations of the earth. From your great land a most precious seed was brought to the land of darkness. It was planted here, not by means of guns and men-of-war and threatenings. It was planted by means of the ignorant, the neglected, the despised. Such was the introduction of the word of the Almighty God into this group of Nuuhiwa. Great is my debt to Americans, who have taught me all things pertaining to this life and to that which is to come.

How shall I repay your great kindness to me? Thus David asked of Jehovah, and thus I ask of you, the President of the United States. This my only payment—that which I have received of the Lord, love—(aloha).

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

LONG-PIG — A CANNIBAL HIGH PLACE

NOTHING more strongly arouses our disgust than cannibalism, nothing so surely unmortars a society; nothing, we might plausibly argue, will so harden and degrade the minds of those that practise it. And yet we ourselves make much the same appearance in the eyes of the Buddhist and the vegetarian. We consume the carcases of creatures of like appetites, passions, and organs with ourselves; we feed on babes, though not our own; and the slaughter-house resounds daily with screams of pain and fear. We distinguish indeed; but the unwillingness of many nations to eat the dog, an animal with whom we live on terms of the next intimacy, shows how precariously the distinction is grounded. The pig is the main element of animal food among the islands; and I had many occasions, my mind being quickened by my cannibal surroundings, to observe his character and the manner of his death. Many islanders live with their pigs as we do with our dogs; both crowd around

Digitized by Google

the hearth with equal freedom; and the island pig is a fellow of activity, enterprise, and sense. He husks his own cocoa-nuts, and (I am told) rolls them into the sun to burst; he is the terror of the shepherd. Mrs. Stevenson, senior, has seen one fleeing to the woods with a lamb in his mouth; and I saw another come rapidly (and erroneously) to the conclusion that the *Casco* was going down, and swim through the flush water to the rail in search of an escape. It was told us in childhood that pigs cannot swim; I have known one to leap overboard, swim five hundred yards to shore, and return to the house of his original owner. I was once, at Tautira, a pig-master on a considerable scale; at first, in my pen, the utmost good feeling prevailed; a little sow with a belly-ache came and appealed to us for help in the manner of a child; and there was one shapely black boar, whom we called Catholicus, for he was a particular present from the Catholics of the village, and who early displayed the marks of courage and friendliness; no other animal, whether dog or pig, was suffered to approach him at his food, and for human beings he showed a full measure of that toadying fondness, so common in the lower animals, and possibly their chief title to the name. One day, on visiting my piggery, I was amazed to see Catholicus draw back from my approach with cries of terror; and if I was amazed at the change, I was truly embarrassed when I learnt its reason. One of

Digitized by Google

the pigs had been that morning killed; Catholicus had seen the murder, he had discovered he was dwelling in the shambles, and from that time his confidence and his delight in life were ended. We still reserved him a long while, but he could not endure the sight of any two-legged creature, nor could we, under the circumstances, encounter his eye without confusion. I have assisted besides, by the ear, at the act of butchery itself; the victim's cries of pain I think I could have borne, but the execution was mismanaged, and his expression of terror was contagious: that small heart moved to the same tune with ours. Upon such "dread foundations" the life of the European reposes, and yet the European is among the less cruel of races. The paraphernalia of murder, the preparatory brutalities of his existence, are all hid away; an extreme sensibility reigns upon the surface; and ladies will faint at the recital of one tithe of what they daily expect of their butchers. Some will be even crying out upon me in their hearts for the coarseness of this paragraph. And so with the island cannibals. They were not cruel; apart from this custom, they are a race of the most kindly; rightly speaking, to cut a man's flesh after he is dead is far less hateful than to oppress him whilst he lives; and even the victims of their appetite were gently used in life and suddenly and painlessly despatched at last. In island circles of refinement it was doubtless thought

Digitized by Google

bad taste to expatiate on what was ugly in the practice.

Cannibalism is traced from end to end of the Pacific, from the Marquesas to New Guinea, from New Zealand to Hawaii, here in the lively haunt of its exercise, there by scanty but significant survivals. Hawaii is the most doubtful. We find cannibalism chronicled in Hawaii, only in the history of a single war, where it seems to have been thought exceptional, as in the case of mountain outlaws, such as fell by the hand of Theseus. In Tahiti, a single circumstance survived, but that appears conclusive. In historic times, when human oblation was made in the marae, the eyes of the victim were formally offered to the chief: a delicacy to the leading guest. All Melanesia appears tainted. In Micronesia, in the Marshalls, with which my acquaintance is no more than that of a tourist, I could find no trace at all; and even in the Gilbert zone I long looked and asked in vain. I was told tales indeed of men who had been eaten in a famine; but these were nothing to my purpose, for the same thing is done under the same stress by all kindreds and generations of men. At last, in some manuscript notes of Dr. Turner's, which I was allowed to consult at Malua, I came on one damning evidence: on the island of Onoatoa the punishment for theft was to be killed and eaten. How shall we account for the universality of the practice over so vast an area, among people of

Digitized by Google

such varying civilisation, and, with whatever intermixture, of such different blood? What circumstance is common to them all, but that they lived on islands destitute, or very nearly so, of animal food? I can never find it in my appetite that man was meant to live on vegetables only. When our stores ran low among the islands, I grew to weary for the recurrent day when economy allowed us to open another tin of miserable mutton. And in at least one ocean language, a particular word denotes that man is "hungry for fish," having reached that stage when vegetables can no longer satisfy, and his soul, like those of the Hebrews in the desert, begins to lust after flesh-pots. Add to this the evidences of over-population and imminent famine already adduced, and I think we see some ground of indulgence for the island cannibal.

It is right to look at both sides of any question; but I am far from making the apology of this worse than bestial vice. The higher Polynesian races, such as the Tahitians, Hawaiians, and Samoans, had one and all outgrown, and some of them had in part forgot, the practice, before Cook or Bougainville had shown a topsail in their waters. It lingered only in some low islands where life was difficult to maintain, and among inveterate savages like the New Zealanders or the Marquesans. The Marquesans intertwined man-eating with the whole texture of their lives; long-pig was in a sense their currency and sacra-

Digitized by Google

ment; it formed the hire of the artist, illustrated public events, and was the occasion and attraction of a feast. To-day they are paying the penalty of this bloody commixture. The civil power, in its crusade against man-eating, has had to examine one after another all Marquesan arts and pleasures, has found them one after another tainted with a cannibal element, and one after another has placed them on the proscript list. Their art of tattooing stood by itself, the execution exquisite, the designs most beautiful and intricate; nothing more handsomely sets off a handsome man; it may cost some pain in the beginning, but I doubt if it be near so painful in the long-run, and I am sure it is far more becoming than the ignoble European practice of tight-lacing among women. And now it has been found needful to forbid the art. Their songs and dances were numerous (and the law has had to abolish them by the dozen). They now face empty-handed the tedium of their uneventful days; and who shall pity them? The least rigorous will say that they were justly served.

Death alone could not satisfy Marquesan vengeance: the flesh must be eaten. The chief who seized Mr. Whalon preferred to eat him; and he thought he had justified the wish when he explained it was a vengeance. Two or three years ago, the people of a valley seized and slew a wretch who had offended them. His offence, it is to be supposed, was dire; they could not bear

Digitized by Google

to leave their vengeance incomplete, and, under the eyes of the French, they did not dare to hold a public festival. The body was accordingly divided; and every man retired to his own house to consummate the rite in secret, carrying his proportion of the dreadful meat in a Swedish match-box. The barbarous substance of the drama and the European properties employed offer a seizing contrast to the imagination. Yet more striking is another incident of the very year when I was there myself, 1888. In the spring, a man and woman skulked about the school-house in Hiva-oa till they found a particular child alone. Him they approached with honeyed words and carneying manners—"You are So-and-so, son of So-and-so?" they asked; and caressed and beguiled him deeper in the woods. Some instinct woke in the child's bosom, or some look betrayed the horrid purpose of his deceivers. He sought to break from them; he screamed; and they, casting off the mask, seized him the more strongly and began to run. His cries were heard; his schoolmates, playing not far off, came running to the rescue; and the sinister couple fled and vanished in the woods. They were never identified; no prosecution followed; but it was currently supposed they had some grudge against the boy's father, and designed to eat him in revenge. All over the islands, as at home among our own ancestors, it will be observed that the avenger takes no particular heed to strike

Digitized by Google

an individual. A family, a class, a village, a whole valley or island, a whole race of mankind, share equally the guilt of any member. So, in the above story, the son was to pay the penalty for his father; so Mr. Whalon, the mate of an American whaler, was to bleed and be eaten for the misdeeds of a Peruvian slaver. I am reminded of an incident in Jaluit in the Marshall group, which was told me by an eye-witness, and which I tell here again for the strangeness of the scene. Two men had awakened the animosity of the Jaluit chiefs; and it was their wives who were selected to be punished. A single native served as executioner. Early in the morning, in the face of a large concourse of spectators, he waded out upon the reef between his victims. These neither complained nor resisted; accompanied their destroyer patiently; stooped down, when they had waded deep enough at his command; and he (laying one hand upon the shoulders of each) held them under water till they drowned. Doubtless, although my informant did not tell me so, their families would be lamenting aloud upon the beach.

It was from Hatiheu that I paid my first visit to a cannibal high place.

The day was sultry and clouded. Drenching tropical showers succeeded bursts of sweltering sunshine. The green pathway of the road wound steeply upward. As we went, our little schoolboy guide a little ahead of us, Father

Digitized by Google

Simeon had his portfolio in his hand, and named the trees for me, and read aloud from his notes the abstract of their virtues. Presently the road, mounting, showed us the vale of Hatiheu on a larger scale; and the priest, with occasional reference to our guide, pointed out the boundaries and told me the names of the larger tribes that lived at perpetual war in the old days; one on the north-east, one along the beach, one behind upon the mountain. With a survivor of this latter clan Father Simeon had spoken; until the pacification he had never been to the sea's edge, nor, if I remember exactly, eaten of sea-fish. Each in its own district, the septs lived cantoned and beleaguered. One step without the boundaries was to affront death. If famine came, the men must out to the woods to gather chestnuts and small fruits; even as to this day, if the parents are backward in their weekly doles, school must be broken up and the scholars sent foraging. But in the old days, when there was trouble in one clan, there would be activity in all its neighbours; the woods would be laid full of ambushes; and he who went after vegetables for himself might remain to be a joint for his hereditary foes. Nor was the pointed occasion needful. A dozen different natural signs and social junctures called this people to the war-path and the cannibal hunt. Let one of chiefly rank have finished his tattooing, the wife of one be near upon her time, two of the debouching streams

Digitized by Google

have deviated nearer on the beach of Hatiheu, a certain bird have been heard to sing, a certain ominous formation of cloud observed above the northern sea; and instantly the arms were oiled, and the man-hunters swarmed into the wood to lay their fratricidal ambuscades. It appears besides that occasionally, perhaps in famine, the priest would shut himself in his house, where he lay for a stated period like a person dead. When he came forth it was to run for three days through the territory of the clan, naked and starving, and to sleep at night alone in the high place. It was now the turn of the others to keep the house, for to encounter the priest upon his rounds was death. On the eve of the fourth day the time of the running was over; the priest returned to his roof, the laymen came forth, and in the morning the number of the victims was announced. I have this tale of the priest on one authority—I think a good one,—but I set it down with diffidence. The particulars are so striking that, had they been true, I almost think I must have heard them oftener referred to. Upon one point there seems to be no question: that the feast was sometimes furnished from within the clan. In times of scarcity, all who were not protected by their family connections —in the Highland expression, all the commons of the clan—had cause to tremble. It was vain to resist, it was useless to flee. They were begirt upon all hands by cannibals; and the oven

Digitized by Google

was ready to smoke for them abroad in the country of their foes, or at home in the valley of their fathers.

At a certain corner of the road our scholar-guide struck off to his left into the twilight of the forest. We were now on one of the ancient native roads, plunged in a high vault of wood, and clambering, it seemed, at random over boulders and dead trees; but the lad wound in and out and up and down without a check, for these paths are to the natives as marked as the king's highway is to us; insomuch that, in the days of the man-hunt, it was their labour rather to block and deface than to improve them. In the crypt of the wood the air was clammy and hot and cold; overhead, upon the leaves, the tropical rain uproariously poured, but only here and there, as through holes in a leaky roof, a single drop would fall, and make a spot upon my mackintosh. Presently the huge trunk of a banyan hove in sight, standing upon what seemed the ruins of an ancient fort; and our guide, halting and holding forth his arm, announced that we had reached the *paepae tapu*.

Paepae signifies a floor or platform such as a native house is built on; and even such a paepae —a paepae hae—may be called a paepae tapu in a lesser sense when it is deserted and becomes the haunt of spirits; but the public high place, such as I was now treading, was a thing on a great scale. As far as my eyes could pierce through

Digitized by Google

the dark undergrowth, the floor of the forest was all paved. Three tiers of terrace ran on the slope of the hill; in front, a crumbling parapet contained the main arena; and the pavement of that was pierced and parcelled out with several wells and small enclosures. No trace remained of any superstructure, and the scheme of the amphitheatre was difficult to seize. I visited another in Hiva-oa, smaller but more perfect, where it was easy to follow rows of benches, and to distinguish isolated seats of honour for eminent persons; and where, on the upper platform, a single joist of the temple or dead house still remained, its uprights richly carved. In the old days the high place was sedulously tended. No tree except the sacred banyan was suffered to encroach upon its grades, no dead leaf to rot upon the pavement. The stones were smoothly set, and I am told they were kept bright with oil. On all sides the guardians lay encamped in their subsidiary huts to watch and cleanse it. No other foot of man was suffered to draw near; only the priest, in the days of his running, came there to sleep—perhaps to dream of his ungodly errand; but, in the time of the feast, the clan trooped to the high place in a body, and each had his appointed seat. There were places for the chiefs, the drummers, the dancers, the women, and the priests. The drums, perhaps twenty strong, and some of them twelve feet high—continuously throbbed in time. In time the

Digitized by Google

singers kept up their long-drawn, lugubrious, ululating song; in time, too, the dancers, tricked out in singular finery, stepped, leaped, swayed, and gesticulated, their plumed fingers fluttering in the air like butterflies. The sense of time, in all these ocean races, is extremely perfect; and I conceive in such a festival that almost every sound and movement fell in one. So much the more unanimously must have grown the agitation of the feasters: so much the more wild must have been the scene to any European who could have beheld them there, in the strong sun and the strong shadow of the banyan, rubbed with saffron to throw in a more high relief the arabesque of the tattoo; the women bleached by days of confinement to a complexion almost European; the chiefs crowned with silver plumes of old men's beards and girt with kirtles of the hair of dead women. All manner of island food was meanwhile spread for the women and the commons; and, for those who were privileged to eat of it, there were carried up to the dead-house the baskets of long-pig. It is told that the feasts were long kept up; the people came from them brutishly exhausted with debauchery, and the chiefs heavy with their beastly food. There are certain sentiments which we call emphatically human—denying the honour of that name to those who lack them. In such feasts—particularly where the victim had been slain at home, and men banqueted on the poor clay of a com-

Digitized by Google

rade with whom they had played in infancy, or a woman whose favours they had shared—the whole body of these sentiments is outraged. To consider it too closely is to understand, if not to excuse, these fervours of self-righteous old ship-captains, who would man their guns, and open fire in passing, on a cannibal island.

And yet it was strange. There, upon the spot as I stood under the high, dripping vault of the forest, with the young priest on the one hand, in his kilted gown, and the bright-eyed Marquesan schoolboy on the other, the whole business appeared infinitely distant, and fallen in the cold perspective and dry light of history. The bearing of the priest, perhaps, affected me. He smiled; he jested with the boy, the heir both of these feasters and their meat; he clapped his hands, and gave me a stave of one of the old, ill-omened choruses. Centuries might have come and gone since this slimy theatre was last in operation; and I beheld the place with no more emotion than I might have felt in visiting Stonehenge. In Hiva-oa, as I began to appreciate that the thing was still living and latent about my footsteps, and that it was still within the bounds of possibility that I might hear the cry of the trapped victim, my historic attitude entirely failed, and I was sensible of some repugnance for the natives. But here, too, the priests maintained their jocular attitude: rallying the cannibals as upon an eccentricity rather absurd

Digitized by Google

than horrible; seeking, I should say, to shame them from the practice by good-natured ridicule, as we shame a child from stealing sugar. We may here recognise the temperate and sagacious mind of Bishop Dordillon.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

THE STORY OF A PLANTATION

TAAHAUKU, on the south-westerly coast of the island of Hiva-oa—Tahuku, say the slovenly whites—may be called the port of Atuona. It is a narrow and small anchorage, set between low cliffy points, and opening above upon a woody valley: a little French fort, now disused and deserted, overhangs the valley and the inlet. Atuona itself, at the head of the next bay, is framed in a theatre of mountains, which dominate the more immediate setting of Taahauku and give the salient character of the scene. They are reckoned at no higher than four thousand feet; but Tahiti with eight thousand, and Hawaii with fifteen, can offer no such picture of abrupt, melancholy alps. In the morning, when the sun falls directly on their front, they stand like a vast wall: green to the summit, if by any chance the summit should be clear—watercourses here and there delineated on their face, as narrow as cracks. Towards afternoon, the light falls more obliquely, and the sculpture of the range comes in relief, huge gorges sinking

Digitized by Google

into shadow, huge, tortuous buttresses standing edged with sun. At all hours of the day they strike the eye with some new beauty, and the mind with the same menacing gloom.

The mountains, dividing and deflecting the endless airy deluge of the Trade, are doubtless answerable for the climate. A strong draught of wind blew day and night over the anchorage. Day and night the same fantastic and attenuated clouds fled across the heavens, the same dusky cap of rain and vapour fell and rose on the mountain. The land-breezes came very strong and chill, and the sea, like the air, was in perpetual bustle. The swell crowded into the narrow anchorage like sheep into a fold; broke all along both sides, high on the one, low on the other; kept a certain blowhole sounding and smoking like a cannon; and spent itself at last upon the beach.

On the side away from Atuona, the sheltering promontory was a nursery of coco-trees. Some were mere infants, none had attained to any size, none had yet begun to shoot skyward with that whip-like shaft of the mature palm. In the young trees the colour alters with the age and growth. Now all is of a grass-like hue, infinitely dainty; next the rib grows golden, the fronds remaining green as ferns; and then, as the trunk continues to mount and to assume its final hue of grey, the fans put on manlier and more decided depths of verdure, stand out dark

Digitized by Google

upon the distance, glisten against the sun, and flash like silver fountains in the assault of the wind. In this young wood of Taahauku, all these hues and combinations were exampled and repeated by the score. The trees grew pleasantly spaced upon a hilly sward, here and there interspersed with a rack for drying copra, or a tumble-down hut for storing it. Every here and there the stroller had a glimpse of the *Casco* tossing in the narrow anchorage below; and beyond he had ever before him the dark amphitheatre of the Atuona mountains and the cliffy bluff that closes it to seaward. The trade wind moving in the fans made a ceaseless noise of summer rain; and from time to time with the sound of a sudden and distant drum-beat, the surf would burst in a sea-cave.

At the upper end of the inlet, its low, cliffy lining sinks, at both sides, into a beach. A copra warehouse stands in the shadow of the shoreside trees, flitted about for ever by a clan of dwarfish swallows; and a line of rails on a high wooden staging bends back into the mouth of the valley. Walking on this, the new-landed traveller becomes aware of a broad fresh-water lagoon (one arm of which he crosses), and beyond, of a grove of noble palms, sheltering the house of the trader, Mr. Keane. Overhead, the cocos join in a continuous and lofty roof; blackbirds are heard lustily singing; the island cock springs his jubilant rattle and airs his golden plumage; cow-bells

Digitized by Google

sound far and near in the grove; and when you sit in the broad verandah, lulled by this symphony, you may say to yourself, if you are able: "Better fifty years of Europe. . . ." Farther on, the floor of the valley is flat and green, and dotted here and there with stripling coco-palms. Through the midst, with many changes of music, the river trots and brawls; and along its course, where we should look for willows, puraos grow in clusters, and make shadowy pools after an angler's heart. A vale more rich and peaceful, sweeter air, a sweeter voice of rural sounds, I have found nowhere. One circumstance alone might strike the experienced: here is a convenient beach, deep soil, good water, and yet nowhere any paepaes, nowhere any trace of island habitation.

It is but a few years since this valley was a place choked with jungle, the debatable land and battleground of cannibals. Two clans laid claim to it—neither could substantiate the claim, and the roads lay desert, or were only visited by men in arms. It is for this very reason that it wears now so smiling an appearance: cleared, planted, built upon, supplied with railways, boat-houses, and bath-houses. For, being no man's land, it was the more readily ceded to a stranger. The stranger was Captain John Hart: Ima Hati, "Broken-arm," the natives call him, because when he first visited the islands his arm was in a sling. Captain Hart, a man of English

Digitized by Google

birth but an American subject, had conceived the idea of cotton culture in the Marquesas during the American War, and was at first rewarded with success. His plantation at Anaho was highly productive; island cotton fetched a high price, and the natives used to debate which was the stronger power, Ima Hati or the French: deciding in favour of the captain, because, though the French had the most ships, he had the more money.

He marked Taahauku for a suitable site, acquired it, and offered the superintendence to Mr. Robert Stewart, a Fifeshire man, already some time in the islands, who had just been ruined by a war on Tauata. Mr. Stewart was somewhat averse to the adventure, having some acquaintance with Atuona and its notorious chieftain, Moipu. He had once landed there, he told me, about dusk, and found the remains of a man and woman partly eaten. On his starting and sickening at the sight, one of Moipu's young men picked up a human foot, and provocatively staring at the stranger, grinned and nibbled at the heel. None need be surprised if Mr. Stewart fled incontinently to the bush, lay there all night in a great horror of mind, and got off to sea again by daylight on the morrow. "It was always a bad place, Atuona," commented Mr. Stewart, in his homely Fifeshire voice. In spite of this dire introduction, he accepted the captain's offer, was landed at Taahauku with

Digitized by Google

three Chinamen, and proceeded to clear the jungle.

War was pursued at that time, almost without interval, between the men of Atuona and the men of Haamau; and one day, from the opposite sides of the valley, battle—or I should rather say the noise of battle—raged all the afternoon: the shots and insults of the opposing clans passing from hill to hill over the heads of Mr. Stewart and his Chinamen. There was no genuine fighting; it was like a bicker of schoolboys, only some fool had given the children guns. One man died of his exertions in running, the only casualty. With night the shots and insults ceased; the men of Haamau withdrew; and victory, on some occult principle, was scored to Moipu. Perhaps in consequence, there came a day when Moipu made a feast, and a party from Haamau came under safe-conduct to eat of it. These passed early by Taahauku, and some of Moipu's young men were there to be a guard of honour. They were not long gone before there came down from Haamau, a man, his wife, and a girl of twelve, their daughter, bringing fungus. Several Atuona lads were hanging round the store; but the day being one of truce none apprehended danger. The fungus was weighed and paid for; the man of Haamau proposed he should have his axe ground in the bargain; and Mr. Stewart demurring at the trouble, some of the Atuona lads offered to grind it for him, and set it on the wheel.

Digitized by Google

While the axe was grinding, a friendly native whispered Mr. Stewart to have a care of himself, for there was trouble in hand; and, all at once, the man of Haamau was seized, and his head and arm stricken from his body, the head at one sweep of his own newly sharpened axe. In the first alert, the girl escaped among the cotton; and Mr. Stewart, having thrust the wife into the house and locked her in from the outside, supposed the affair was over. But the business had not passed without noise, and it reached the ears of an older girl who had loitered by the way, and who now came hastily down the valley, crying as she came for her father. Her, too, they seized and beheaded; I know not what they had done with the axe, it was a blunt knife that served their butcherly turn upon the girl; and the blood spurted in fountains and painted them from head to foot. Thus horrible from crime, the party returned to Atuona, carrying the heads to Moipu. It may be fancied how the feast broke up; but it is notable that the guests were honourably suffered to retire. These passed back through Taahauku in extreme disorder; a little after the valley began to be overrun with shouting and triumphing braves; and a letter of warning coming at the same time to Mr. Stewart, he and his Chinamen took refuge with the Protestant missionary in Atuona. That night the store was gutted, and the bodies cast in a pit and covered with leaves. Three days later the schooner had

Digitized by Google

come in; and things appearing quieter, Mr. Stewart and the captain landed in Taahauku to compute the damage and to view the grave, which was already indicated by the stench. While they were so employed, a party of Moipu's young men, decked with red flannel to indicate martial sentiments, came over the hills from Atuona, dug up the bodies, washed them in the river, and carried them away on sticks. That night the feast began.

Those who knew Mr. Stewart before this experience declare the man to be quite altered. He stuck, however, to his post; and somewhat later, when the plantation was already well established, and gave employment to sixty Chinamen and seventy natives, he found himself once more in dangerous times. The men of Haamau, it was reported, had sworn to plunder and erase the settlement; letters came continually from the Hawaiian missionary, who acted as intelligence department; and for six weeks Mr. Stewart and three other whites slept in the cotton-house at night in a rampart of bales, and (what was their best defence) ostentatiously practised rifle-shooting by day upon the beach. Natives were often there to watch them; the practice was excellent; and the assault was never delivered—if it ever was intended, which I doubt, for the natives are more famous for false rumours than for deeds of energy. I was told the late French war was a case in point; the tribes on the beach accusing

Digitized by Google

those in the mountains of designs which they had never the hardihood to entertain. And the same testimony to their backwardness in open battle reached me from all sides. Captain Hart once landed after an engagement in a certain bay; one man had his hand hurt, an old woman and two children had been slain; and the captain improved the occasion by poulticing the hand, and taunting both sides upon so wretched an affair. It is true these wars were often merely formal—comparable with duels to the first blood. Captain Hart visited a bay where such a war was being carried on between two brothers, one of whom had been thought wanting in civility to the guests of the other. About one half of the population served day about upon alternate sides, so as to be well with each when the inevitable peace should follow. The forts of the belligerents were over against each other, and close by. Pigs were cooking. Well-oiled braves, with well-oiled muskets, strutted on the paepae or sat down to feast. No business, however needful, could be done, and all thoughts were supposed to be centred in this mockery of war. A few days later, by a regrettable accident, a man was killed; it was felt at once the thing had gone too far, and the quarrel was instantly patched up. But the more serious wars were prosecuted in a similar spirit; a gift of pigs and a feast made their inevitable end; the killing of a single man was a great victory, and the mur-

Digitized by Google

der of defenceless solitaries counted a heroic deed.

The foot of the cliffs, about all these islands, is the place of fishing. Between Taahauku and Atuona we saw men, but chiefly women, some nearly naked, some in thin white or crimson dresses, perched in little surfbeat promontories —the brown precipice overhanging them, and the convolvulus overhanging that, as if to cut them off the more completely from assistance. There they would angle much of the morning; and as fast as they caught any fish, eat them, raw and living, where they stood. It was such helpless ones that the warriors from the opposite island of Tauata slew, and carried home and ate, and were thereupon accounted mighty men of valour. Of one such exploit I can give the account of an eye-witness. "Portuguese Joe," Mr. Keane's cook, was once pulling an oar in an Atuona boat, when they spied a stranger in a canoe with some fish and a piece of tapu. The Atuona men cried upon him to draw near and have a smoke. He complied, because, I suppose, he had no choice; but he knew, poor devil, what he was coming to, and (as Joe said) "he didn't seem to care about the smoke." A few questions followed, as to where he came from and what was his business. These he must needs answer, as he must needs draw at the unwelcome pipe, his heart the while drying in his bosom. And then, of a sudden, a big fellow in

Digitized by Google

Joe's boat leaned over, plucked the stranger from his canoe, struck him with a knife in the neck—inward and downward, as Joe showed in pantomime more expressive than his words—and held him under water, like a fowl, until his struggles ceased. Whereupon the long-pig was hauled on board, the boat's head turned about for Atuona, and these Marquesan braves pulled home rejoicing. Moipu was on the beach and rejoiced with them on their arrival. Poor Joe toiled at his oar that day with a white face, yet he had no fear for himself. "They were very good to me—gave me plenty grub: never wished to eat white man," said he.

If the most horrible experience was Mr. Stewart's, it was Captain Hart himself who ran the nearest danger. He had bought a piece of land from Timau, chief of a neighbouring bay, and put some Chinese there to work. Visiting the station with one of the Godeffroys, he found his Chinamen trooping to the beach in terror; Timau had driven them out, seized their effects, and was in war attire with his young men. A boat was despatched to Taahauku for reinforcement; as they awaited her return, they could see, from the deck of the schooner, Timau and his young men dancing the war-dance on a hill-top till past twelve at night; and as soon as the boat came (bringing three gendarmes, armed with chasse-pots, two white men from Taahauku station, and some native warriors) the party set

Digitized by Google

out to seize the chief before he should awake. Day was not come, and it was a very bright moonlight morning, when they reached the hill-top where (in a house of palm-leaves) Timau was sleeping off his debauch. The assailants were fully exposed, the interior of the hut quite dark; the position far from sound. The gendarmes knelt with their pieces ready, and Captain Hart advanced alone. As he drew near the door he heard the snap of a gun cocking from within, and in sheer self-defence—there being no other escape—sprang into the house and grappled Timau. "Timau, come with me!" he cried. But Timau—a great fellow, his eyes blood-red with the abuse of kava, six foot three in stature—cast him on one side; and the captain, instantly expecting to be either shot or brained, discharged his pistol in the dark. When they carried Timau out at the door into the moonlight, he was already dead, and, upon this unlooked for termination of their sally, the whites appeared to have lost all conduct, and retreated to the boats, fired upon by the natives as they went. Captain Hart, who almost rivals Bishop Dordillon in popularity, shared with him the policy of extreme indulgence to the natives, regarding them as children, making light of their defects, and constantly in favour of mild measures. The death of Timau has thus somewhat weighed upon his mind; the more so, as the chieftain's musket was found in the house unloaded. To a less

Digitized by Google

delicate conscience the matter will seem light. If a drunken savage elects to cock a fire-arm, a gentleman advancing towards him in the open cannot wait to make sure if it be charged.

I have touched on the captain's popularity. It is one of the things that most strikes a stranger in the Marquesas. He comes instantly on two names, both new to him, both locally famous, both mentioned by all with affection and respect —the bishop's and the captain's. It gave me a strong desire to meet with the survivor, which was subsequently gratified—to the enrichment of these pages. Long after that again, in the Place Dolorous—Molokai—I came once more on the traces of that affectionate popularity. There was a blind white leper there, an old sailor—"an old tough," he called himself—who had long sailed among the eastern islands. Him I used to visit, and, being fresh from the scenes of his activity, gave him the news. This (in the true island style) was largely a chronicle of wrecks; and it chanced I mentioned the case of one not very successful captain, and how he had lost a vessel for Mr. Hart; thereupon the blind leper broke forth in lamentation. "Did he lose a ship of John Hart's?" he cried; "poor John Hart! Well, I'm sorry it was Hart's," with needless force of epithet, which I neglect to reproduce.

Perhaps, if Captain Hart's affairs had continued to prosper, his popularity might have

Digitized by Google

been different. Success wins glory, but it kills affection, which misfortune fosters. And the misfortune which overtook the captain's enterprise was truly singular. He was at the top of his career. Ile Masse belonged to him, given by the French as an indemnity for the robberies at Taahauku. But the Ile Masse was only suitable for cattle; and his two chief stations were Anaho, in Nuka-hiva, facing the north-east, and Taahauku in Hiva-oa, some hundred miles to the southward, and facing the south-west. Both these were on the same day swept by a tidal wave, which was not felt in any other bay or island of the group. The south coast of Hiva-oa was bestrewn with building timber and camphor-wood chests, containing goods; which, on the promise of a reasonable salvage, the natives very honestly brought back, the chests apparently not opened, and some of the wood after it had been built into their houses. But the recovery of such jetsam could not affect the result. It was impossible the captain should withstand this partiality of fortune; and with his fall the prosperity of the Marquesas ended. Anaho is truly extinct, Taahauku but a shadow of itself; nor has any new plantation arisen in their stead.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

CHARACTERS

THERE was a certain traffic in our anchorage at Atuona; different indeed from the dead inertia and quiescence of the sister island, Nuka-hiva. Sails were seen steering from its mouth; now it would be a whale-boat manned with native rowdies, and heavy with copra for sale; now perhaps a single canoe come after commodities to buy. The anchorage was besides frequented by fishers; not only the lone females perched in niches of the cliff, but whole parties, who would sometimes camp and build a fire upon the beach, and sometimes lie in their canoes in the midst of the haven and jump by turns in the water; which they would cast eight or nine feet high, to drive, as we supposed, the fish into their nets. The goods the purchasers came to buy were sometimes quaint. I remarked one outrigger returning with a single ham swung from a pole in the stern. And one day there came into Mr. Keane's store a charming lad, excellently mannered, speaking French correctly though with a babyish accent; very handsome

Digitized by Google

too, and much of a dandy, as was shown not only in his shining raiment, but by the nature of his purchases. These were five ship-biscuits, a bottle of scent, and two balls of washing blue. He was from Tauata, whither he returned the same night in an outrigger, daring the deep with these young-ladyish treasures. The gross of the native passengers were more ill-favoured: tall, powerful fellows, well tattooed, and with disquieting manners. Something coarse and jeering distinguished them, and I was often reminded of the slums of some great city. One night, as dusk was falling, a whale-boat put in on that part of the beach where I chanced to be alone. Six or seven ruffianly fellows scrambled out; all had enough English to give me "good-bye," which was the ordinary salutation; or "good-morning," which they seemed to regard as an intensitive; jest followed, they surrounded me with harsh laughter and rude looks, and I was glad to move away. I had not yet encountered Mr. Stewart, or I should have been reminded of his first landing at Atuona and the humourist who nibbled at the heel. But their neighbourhood depressed me; and I felt, if I had been there a castaway and out of reach of help, my heart would have been sick.

Nor was the traffic altogether native. While we lay in the anchorage there befell a strange coincidence. A schooner was observed at sea and aiming to enter. We knew all the schooners in

Digitized by Google

the group, but this appeared larger than any; she was rigged, besides, after the English manner; and, coming to an anchor some way outside the *Casco*, showed at last the blue ensign. There were at that time, according to rumour, no fewer than four yachts in the Pacific; but it was strange that any two of them should thus lie side by side in that outlandish inlet: stranger still that in the owner of the *Nyanza*, Captain Dewar, I should find a man of the same country and the same county with myself, and one whom I had seen walking as a boy on the shores of the Alpes Maritimes.

We had besides a white visitor from shore, who came and departed in a crowded whaleboat manned by natives; having read of yachts in the Sunday papers, and being fired with the desire to see one. Captain Chase, they called him, an old whaler-man, thickset and white-bearded, with a strong Indian drawl; years old in the country, a good backer in battle, and one of those dead shots whose practice at the target struck terror in the braves of Haamau. Captain Chase dwelt farther east in a bay called Hanamate, with a Mr. M'Callum; or rather they had dwelt together once, and were now amicably separated. The captain is to be found near one end of the bay, in a wreck of a house, and waited on by a Chinese. At the point of the opposing corner another habitation stands on a tall pae-pae. The surf runs there exceeding heavy, seas

Digitized by Google

of seven and eight feet high bursting under the walls of the house, which is thus continually filled with their clamour, and rendered fit only for solitary, or at least for silent, inmates. Here it is that Mr. M'Callum, with a Shakespeare and a Burns, enjoys the society of the breakers. His name and his Burns testify to Scottish blood; but he is an American born, somewhere far east; followed the trade of a ship-carpenter; and was long employed, the captain of a hundred Indians, breaking up wrecks about Cape Flattery. Many of the whites who are to be found scattered in the South Seas represent the more artistic portion of their class; and not only enjoy the poetry of that new life, but came there on purpose to enjoy it. I have been shipmates with a man, no longer young, who sailed upon that voyage, his first time to sea, for the mere love of Samoa; and it was a few letters in a newspaper that sent him on that pilgrimage. Mr. M'Callum was another instance of the same. He had read of the South Seas; loved to read of them; and let their image fasten in his heart: till at length he could refrain no longer—must set forth, a new Rudel, for that unseen homeland—and has now dwelt for years in Hiva-oa, and will lay his bones there in the end with full content; having no desire to behold again the places of his boyhood, only, perhaps—once before he dies—the rude and wintry landscape of Cape Flattery. Yet he is an active man, full of schemes; has bought

Digitized by Google

land of the natives; has planted five thousand coco-palms; has a desert island in his eye, which he desires to lease, and a schooner in the stocks, which he has laid and built himself, and even hopes to finish. Mr. M'Callum and I did not meet, but, like gallant troubadours, corresponded in verse. I hope he will not consider it a breach of copyright if I give here a specimen of his muse. He and Bishop Dordillon are the two European bards of the Marquesas.

"Sail, ho! Ahoy! *Casco*,
First among the pleasure fleet
That came around to greet
These isles from San Francisco.

"And first, too; only one
Among the literary men
That this way has ever been——
Welcome, then, to Stevenson.

"Please not offended be
At this little notice
Of the *Casco*, Captain Otis,
With the novelist's family.

"*Avoir une voyage magnifical*,
Is our wish sincere,
That you'll have from here
Allant sur la Grande Pacifical."

But our chief visitor was one Mapiao, a great Tahuku—which seems to mean priest, wizard, tattooer, practiser of any art, or, in a word, esoteric person—and a man famed for his elo-

Digitized by Google

quence on public occasions and witty talk in private. His first appearance was typical of the man. He came down clamorous to the eastern landing, where the surf was running very high; scorned all our signals to go round the bay; carried his point, was brought aboard at some hazard to our skiff, and set down in one corner of the cockpit to his appointed task. He had been hired, as one cunning in the art, to make my old men's beards into a wreath: what a wreath for Celia's arbour! His own beard (which he carried, for greater safety, in a sailor's knot) was not merely the adornment of his age, but a substantial piece of property. One hundred dollars was the estimated value; and as Brother Michel never knew a native to deposit a greater sum with Bishop Dordillon, our friend was a rich man in virtue of his chin. He had something of an East Indian cast, but taller and stronger: his nose hooked, his face narrow, his forehead very high, the whole elaborately tattooed. I may say I have never entertained a guest so trying. In the least particular he must be waited on; he would not go to the scuttle-butt for water; he would not even reach to get the glass, it must be given him in his hand; if aid were denied him, he would fold his arms, bow his head, and go without: only the work would suffer. Early the first forenoon he called aloud for biscuit and salmon; biscuit and ham were brought; he looked on them inscrutably,

Digitized by Google

and signed they should be set aside. A number of considerations crowded on my mind; how the sort of work on which he was engaged was probably tapu in a high degree; should by rights, perhaps, be transacted on a tapu platform which no female might approach; and it was possible that fish might be the essential diet. Some salted fish I therefore brought him, and along with that a glass of rum: at sight of which Mapiao displayed extraordinary animation, pointed to the zenith, made a long speech in which I picked up *umati*—the word for the sun—and signed to me once more to place these dainties out of reach. At last I had understood, and every day the programme was the same. At an early period of the morning his dinner must be set forth on the roof of the house and at a proper distance, full in view but just out of reach; and not until the fit hour, which was the point of noon, would the artificer partake. This solemnity was the cause of an absurd misadventure. He was seated plaiting, as usual, at the beards, his dinner arrayed on the roof, and not far off a glass of water standing. It appears he desired to drink; was of course far too great a gentleman to rise and get the water for himself; and spying Mrs. Stevenson, imperiously signed to her to hand it. The signal was misunderstood; Mrs. Stevenson was, by this time, prepared for any eccentricity on the part of our guest; and instead of passing him the water, flung his dinner over-

Digitized by Google

board. I must do Mapiao justice: all laughed, but his laughter rang the loudest.

These troubles of service were at worst occasional; the embarrassment of the man's talk incessant. He was plainly a practised conversationalist; the nicety of his inflections, the elegance of his gestures, and the fine play of his expression, told us that. We, meanwhile, sat like aliens in a playhouse; we could see the actors were upon some material business and performing well, but the plot of the drama remained undiscoverable. Names of places, the name of Captain Hart, occasional disconnected words, tantalised without enlightening us; and the less we understood, the more gallantly, the more copiously, and with still the more explanatory gestures, Mapiao returned to the assault. We could see his vanity was on the rack; being come to a place where that fine jewel of his conversational talent could earn him no respect; and he had times of despair when he desisted from the endeavour, and instants of irritation when he regarded us with unconcealed contempt. Yet for me, as the practitioner of some kindred mystery to his own, he manifested to the last a measure of respect. As we sat under the awning, in opposite corners of the cockpit, he braiding hairs from dead men's chins, I forming runes upon a sheet of folio paper, he would nod across to me as one Tahuku to another, or, crossing the cockpit, study for a while my shapeless scrawl and

Digitized by Google

encourage me with a heartfelt "*mitai!*—good!" So might a deaf painter sympathise far off with a musician, as the slave and master of some uncomprehended and yet kindred art. A silly trade he doubtless considered it; but a man must make allowance for barbarians—*chaque pays a ses coutumes*—and he felt the principle was there.

The time came at last when his labours, which resembled those rather of Penelope than Hercules, could be no more spun out, and nothing remained but to pay him and say farewell. After a long, learned argument in Marquesan, I gathered that his mind was set on fishhooks; with three of which, and a brace of dollars, I thought he was not ill rewarded for passing his forenoons in our cockpit, eating, drinking, delivering his opinions, and pressing the ship's company into his menial service. For all that, he was a man of so high a bearing, and so like an uncle of my own who should have gone mad and got tattooed, that I applied to him, when we were both on shore, to know if he were satisfied. "*Mitai ehipe?*" I asked. And he, with rich unction, offering at the same time his hand—"*Mitai ehipe, mitai kaekae; kaoha nui!*"—or, to translate freely: "The ship is good, the victuals are up to the mark, and we part in friendship." Which testimonial uttered, he set off along the beach with his head bowed and the air of one deeply injured.

I saw him go, on my side, with relief. It

Digitized by Google

would be more interesting to learn how our relation seemed to Mapiao. His exigence, we may suppose, was merely loyal. He had been hired by the ignorant to do a piece of work; and he was bound that he would do it the right way. Countless obstacles, continual ignorant ridicule, availed not to dissuade him. He had his dinner laid out; watched it, as was fit, the while he worked; ate it at the fit hour; was in all things served and waited on; and could take his hire in the end with a clear conscience, telling himself the mystery was performed duly, the beards rightfully braided, and we (in spite of ourselves) correctly served. His view of our stupidity, even he, the mighty talker, must have lacked language to express. He never interfered with my Tahuku work; civilly praised it, idle as it seemed; civilly supposed that I was competent in my own mystery: such being the attitude of the intelligent and the polite. And we, on the other hand—who had yet the most to gain or lose, since the product was to be ours—who had professed our disability by the very act of hiring him to do it—were never weary of impending his own more important labours, and sometimes lacked the sense and the civility to refrain from laughing.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

IN A CANNIBAL VALLEY

THE road from Taahauku to Atuona skirted the north-westerly side of the anchorage, somewhat high up, edged, and sometimes shaded, by the splendid flowers of the *flamboyant*—its English name I do not know. At the turn of the land, Atuona came in view: a long beach, a heavy and loud breach of surf, a shore-side village scattered among trees, and the guttered mountains drawing near on both sides above a narrow and rich ravine. Its infamous repute perhaps affected me; but I thought it the loveliest, and by far the most ominous and gloomy, spot on earth. Beautiful it surely was; and even more salubrious. The healthfulness of the whole group is amazing; that of Atuona almost in the nature of a miracle. In Atuona, a village planted in a shore-side marsh, the houses standing everywhere intermingled with the pools of a taro-garden, we find every condition of tropical danger and discomfort; and yet there are not even mosquitoes—not even the hateful day-fly

Digitized by Google

of Nuka-hiva—and fever, and its concomitant, the island fe'efe'e,[1] are unknown.

This is the chief station of the French on the man-eating isle of Hiva-oa. The sergeant of gendarmerie enjoys the style of the vice-resident, and hoists the French colours over a quite extensive compound. A Chinaman, a waif from the plantation, keeps a restaurant in the rear quarters of the village; and the mission is well represented by the sisters' school and Brother Michel's church. Father Orens, a wonderful octogenarian, his frame scarce bowed, the fire of his eye undimmed, has lived, and trembled, and suffered in this place since 1843. Again and again, when Moipu had made coco-brandy, he has been driven from his house into the woods. "A mouse that dwelt in a cat's ear" had a more easy resting-place; and yet I have never seen a man that bore less mark of years. He must show us the church, still decorated with the bishop's artless ornaments of paper—the last work of industrious old hands, and the last earthly amusement of a man that was much of a hero. In the sacristy we must see his sacred vessels, and, in particular, a vestment which was a "*vraie curiosité*," because it had been given by a gendarme. To the Protestant there is always something embarrassing in the eagerness with which grown and holy men regard these trifles; but it was touching and pretty to see Orens, his aged

[1] Elephantiasis.

Digitized by Google

eyes shining in his head, display his sacred treasures.

August 26.—The vale behind the village, narrowing swiftly to a mere ravine, was choked with profitable trees. A river gushed in the midst. Overhead, the tall coco-palms made a primary covering; above that, from one wall of the mountain to another, the ravine was roofed with cloud; so that we moved below, amid teeming vegetation, in a covered house of heat. On either hand, at every hundred yards, instead of the houseless, disembowelling paepaes of Nuka-hiva, populous houses turned out their inhabitants to cry "kaoha!" to the passers-by. The road, too, was busy; strings of girls, fair and foul, as in less favoured countries; men bearing breadfruit; the sisters, with a little guard of pupils; a fellow bestriding a horse—passed and greeted us continually; and now it was a Chinaman who came to the gate of his flower-yard, and gave us "Good day" in excellent English; and a little farther on it would be some natives who set us down by the wayside, made us a feast of mummy-apple, and entertained us as we ate with drumming on a tin case. With all this fine plenty of men and fruit, death is at work here also. The population, according to the highest estimate, does not exceed six hundred in the whole vale of Atuona; and yet, when I once chanced to put the question, Brother Michel counted up ten whom he knew to be sick beyond recovery. It was

Digitized by Google

here, too, that I could at last gratify my curiosity with the sight of a native house in the very article of dissolution. It had fallen flat along the paepae, its poles sprawling ungainly; the rains and the mites contended against it; what remained seemed sound enough, but much was gone already; and it was easy to see how the insects consumed the walls as if they had been bread, and the air and the rain ate into them like vitriol. A little ahead of us, a young gentleman, very well tattooed, and dressed in a pair of white trousers and a flannel shirt, had been marching unconcernedly. Of a sudden, without apparent cause, he turned back, took us in possession, and led us undissuadably along a by-path to the river's edge. There in a nook of the most attractive amenity, he bade us to sit down: the stream splashing at our elbow, a shock of nondescript greenery enshrining us from above; and thither, after a brief absence, he brought us a cocoa-nut, a lump of sandal-wood, and a stick he had begun to carve: the nut for present refreshment, the sandal-wood for a precious gift, and the stick—in the simplicity of his vanity—to harvest premature praise. Only one section was yet carved, although the whole was pencil-marked in lengths; and when I proposed to buy it, Poni (for that was the artist's name) recoiled in horror. But I was not to be moved, and simply refused restitution, for I had long wondered why a people who displayed, in their tat-

Digitized by Google

tooing, so great a gift of arabesque invention, should display it nowhere else. Here, at last, I had found something of the same talent in another medium; and I held the incompleteness, in these days of world-wide brummagem, for a happy mark of authenticity. Neither my reasons nor my purpose had I the means of making clear to Poni; I could only hold on to the stick, and bid the artist follow me to the gendarmerie, where I should find interpreters and money; but we gave him, in the meanwhile, a boat-call in return for his sandal-wood. As he came behind us down the vale he sounded upon this continually. And continually, from the wayside houses, there poured forth little groups of girls in crimson, or of men in white. And to these must Poni pass the news of who the strangers were, of what they had been doing, of why it was that Poni had a boat-whistle; and of why he was now being haled to the vice-residency, uncertain whether to be punished or rewarded, uncertain whether he had lost a stick or made a bargain, but hopeful on the whole, and in the meanwhile highly consoled by the boat-whistle. Whereupon he would tear himself away from this particular group of inquirers, and once more we would hear the shrill call in our wake.

August 27.—I made a more extended circuit in the vale with Brother Michel. We were mounted on a pair of sober nags, suitable to these rude paths; the weather was exquisite, and the

Digitized by Google

company in which I found myself no less agreeable than the scenes through which I passed. We mounted at first by a steep grade along the summit of one of those twisted spurs that, from a distance, mark out provinces of sun and shade upon the mountain-side. The ground fell away on either hand with an extreme declivity. From either hand, out of profound ravines, mounted the song of falling water and the smoke of household fires. Here and there the hills of foliage would divide, and our eye would plunge down upon one of these deep-nested habitations. And still, high in front, arose the precipitous barrier of the mountain, greened over where it seemed that scarce a harebell could find root, barred with the zigzags of a human road where it seemed that not a goat could scramble. And in truth, for all the labour that it cost, the road is regarded even by the Marquesans as impassable; they will not risk a horse on that ascent; and those who lie to the westward come and go in their canoes. I never knew a hill to lose so little on a near approach: a consequence, I must suppose, of its surprising steepness. When we turned about, I was amazed to behold so deep a view behind, and so high a shoulder of blue sea, crowned by the whale-like island of Motane. And yet the wall of mountain had not visibly dwindled, and I could even have fancied, as I raised my eyes to measure it, that it loomed higher than before.

We struck now into covert paths, crossed and

Digitized by Google

heard more near at hand the bickering of the streams, and tasted the coolness of those recesses where the houses stood. The birds sang about us as we descended. All along our path my guide was being hailed by voices: "Mikaël—Kaoha, Mikaël!" From the doorstep, from the cotton-patch, or out of the deep grove of island-chestnuts, these friendly cries arose and were cheerily answered as we passed. In a sharp angle of a glen, on a rushing brook and under fathoms of cool foliage, we struck a house upon a well-built paepae, the fire brightly burning under the popoi-shed against the evening meal; and here the cries became a chorus, and the house folk, running out, obliged us to dismount and breathe. It seemed a numerous family: we saw eight at least; and one of these honoured me with a particular attention. This was the mother, a woman naked to the waist, of an aged countenance, but with hair still copious and black, and breasts still erect and youthful. On our arrival I could see she remarked me, but instead of offering any greeting, disappeared at once into the bush. Thence she returned with two crimson flowers. "Good-bye!" was her salutation, uttered not without coquetry; and as she said it she pressed the flowers into my hand—"Good-bye! I speak Inglis." It was from a whalerman, who (she informed me) was "a plenty good chap," that she had learned my language; and I could not but think how handsome she must have been in

Digitized by Google

these times of her youth, and could not but guess that some memories of the dandy whaler-man prompted her attentions to myself. Nor could I refrain from wondering what had befallen her lover; in the rain and mire of what sea-ports he had tramped since then; in what close and garish drinking-dens had found his pleasure; and in the ward of what infirmary dreamed his last of the Marquesas. But she, the more fortunate, lived on in her green island. The talk, in this lost house upon the mountains, ran chiefly upon Mapiao and his visits to the *Casco:* the news of which had probably gone abroad by then to all the island, so that there was no paepae in Hiva-oa where they did not make the subject of excited comment.

Not much beyond we came upon a high place in the foot of the ravine. Two roads divided it, and met in the midst. Save for this intersection the amphitheatre was strangely perfect, and had a certain ruder air of things Roman. Depths of foliage and the bulk of the mountain kept it in a grateful shadow. On the benches several young folk sat clustered or apart. One of these, a girl perhaps fourteen years of age, buxom and comely, caught the eye of Brother Michel. Why was she not at school?—she was done with school now. What was she doing here?—she lived here now. Why so?—no answer but a deepening blush. There was no severity in Brother Michel's manner; the girl's own confusion told her story.

Digitized by Google

"*Elle a honte*," was the missionary's comment, as we rode away. Near by in the stream, a grown girl was bathing naked in a goyle between two stepping-stones; and it amused me to see with what alacrity and real alarm she bounded on her many-coloured underclothes. Even in these daughters of cannibals shame was eloquent.

It is in Hiva-oa, owing to the inveterate cannibalism of the natives, that local beliefs have been most rudely trodden underfoot. It was here that three religious chiefs were set under a bridge, and the women of the valley made to defile over their heads upon the roadway: the poor, dishonoured fellows sitting there (all observers agree) with streaming tears. Not only was one road driven across the high place, but two roads intersected in its midst. There is no reason to suppose that the last was done of purpose, and perhaps it was impossible entirely to avoid the numerous sacred places of the islands. But these things are not done without result. I have spoken already of the regard of Marquesans for the dead, making (as it does) so strange a contrast with their unconcern for death. Early on this day's ride, for instance, we encountered a petty chief, who inquired (of course) where we were going, and suggested by way of amendment: "Why do you not rather show him the cemetery?" I saw it; it was but newly opened, the third within eight years. They are great

Digitized by Google

builders here in Hiva-oa; I saw in my ride pae-paes that no European dry-stone mason could have equalled, the black volcanic stones were laid so justly, the corners were so precise, the levels so true; but the retaining-wall of the new graveyard stood apart, and seemed to be a work of love. The sentiment of honour for the dead is therefore not extinct. And yet observe the consequence of violently countering men's opinions. Of the four prisoners in Atuona gaol, three were of course thieves; the fourth was there for sacrilege. He had levelled up a piece of the graveyard—to give a feast upon, as he informed the court—and declared he had no thought of doing wrong. Why should he? He had been forced at the point of the bayonet to destroy the sacred places of his own piety; when he had recoiled from the task, he had been jeered at for a superstitious fool. And now it is supposed he will respect our European superstitions as by second nature.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV

THE TWO CHIEFS OF ATUONA

IT had chanced (as the *Casco* beat through the Bordelais Straits for Taahauku) she approached on one board very near the land in the opposite isle of Tauata, where houses were to be seen in a grove of tall coco-palms. Brother Michel pointed out the spot. "I am at home now," said he. "I believe I have a large share in these cocoa-nuts; and in that house madame my mother lives with her two husbands!" "With two husbands?" somebody inquired. "*C'est ma honte*," replied the brother dryly.

A word in passing on the two husbands. I conceive the brother to have expressed himself loosely. It seems common enough to find a native lady with two consorts; but these are not two husbands. The first is still the husband; the wife continues to be referred to by his name; and the position of the coadjutor, or *pikio*, although quite regular, appears undoubtedly subordinate. We had opportunities to observe one household of the sort. The *pikio* was recognised; appeared openly along with the husband

Digitized by Google

when the lady was thought to be insulted, and the pair made common cause like brothers. At home the inequality was more apparent. The husband sat to receive and entertain visitors; the *pikio* was running the while to fetch cocoanuts like a hired servant, and I remarked he was sent on these errands in preference even to the son. Plainly we have here no second husband; plainly we have the tolerated lover. Only, in the Marquesas, instead of carrying his lady's fan and mantle, he must turn his hand to do the husband's housework.

The sight of Brother Michel's family estate led the conversation for some while upon the method and consequence of artificial kinship. Our curiosity became extremely whetted; the brother offered to have the whole of us adopted, and some two days later we became accordingly the children of Paaaeau, appointed chief of Atuona. I was unable to be present at the ceremony, which was primitively simple. The two Mrs. Stevensons and Mr. Osbourne, along with Paaaeua, his wife, and an adopted child of theirs, son of a ship-wrecked Austrian, sat down to an excellent island meal, of which the principal and the only necessary dish was pig. A concourse watched them through the apertures of the house; but none, not even Brother Michel, might partake; for the meal was sacramental, and either creative or declaratory of the new relationship. In Tahiti things are not so strictly

Digitized by Google

ordered; when Ori and I "made brothers," both our families sat with us at table, yet only he and I, who had eaten with intention, were supposed to be affected by the ceremony. For the adoption of an infant I believe no formality to be required; the child is handed over by the natural parents, and grows up to inherit the estates of the adoptive. Presents are doubtless exchanged, as at all junctures of island life, social or international; but I never heard of any banquet—the child's presence at the daily board perhaps sufficing. We may find the rationale in the ancient Arabian idea that a common diet makes a common blood, with its derivative axiom that "he is the father who gives the child its morning draught." In the Marquesan practice, the sense would thus be evanescent; from the Tahitian, a mere survival, it will have entirely fled. An interesting parallel will probably occur to many of my readers.

What is the nature of the obligation assumed at such a festival? It will vary with the characters of those engaged, and with the circumstances of the case. Thus it would be absurd to take too seriously our adoption at Atuona. On the part of Paaaeua it was an affair of social ambition; when he agreed to receive us in his family the man had not so much as seen us and knew only that we were inestimably rich and travelled in a floating palace. We, upon our side, ate of his baked meats with no true *animus affiliandi*,

Digitized by Google

but moved by the single sentiment of curiosity. The affair was formal, and a matter of parade, as when in Europe sovereigns call each other cousin. Yet, had we stayed at Atuona, Paaaeua would have held himself bound to establish us upon his land, and to set apart young men for our service, and trees for our support. I have mentioned the Austrian. He sailed in one of two sister ships, which left the Clyde in coal; both rounded the Horn, and both, at several hundred miles of distance, though close on the same point of time, took fire at sea on the Pacific. One was destroyed; the derelict iron frame of the second, after long, aimless cruising, was at length recovered, refitted, and hails to-day from San Francisco. A boat's crew from one of these disasters reached, after great hardships, the isle of Hiva-oa. Some of these men vowed they would never again confront the chances of the sea; but alone of them all the Austrian has been exactly true to his engagement, remains where he landed, and designs to die where he has lived. Now, with such a man, falling and taking root among islanders, the processes described may be compared to a gardener's graft. He passes bodily into the native stock; ceases wholly to be alien; has entered the commune of the blood, shares the prosperity and consideration of his new family, and is expected to impart with the same generosity the fruits of his European skill and knowledge. It is this implied engagement that

Digitized by Google

so frequently offends the ingrafted white. To snatch an immediate advantage—to get (let us say) a station for his store—he will play upon the native custom and become a son or a brother for the day, promising himself to cast down the ladder by which he shall have ascended, and repudiate the kinship so soon as it shall grow burdensome. And he finds there are two parties to the bargain. Perhaps his Polynesian relative is simple, and conceived the blood-bond literally; perhaps he is shrewd, and himself entered the covenant with a view to gain. And either way the store is ravaged, the house littered with lazy natives; and the richer the man grows, the more numerous, the more idle, and the more affectionate he finds his native relatives. Most men thus circumstanced contrive to buy or brutally manage to enforce their independence; but many vegetate without hope, strangled by parasites.

We had no cause to blush with Brother Michel. Our new parents were kind, gentle, well-mannered, and generous in gifts; the wife was a most motherly woman, the husband a man who stood justly high with his employers. Enough has been said to show why Moipu should be deposed; and in Paaaeua the French had found a reputable substitute. He went always scrupulously dressed, and looked the picture of propriety, like a dark, handsome, stupid, and probably religious young man hot from a European funeral. In character he seemed the ideal of what is

Digitized by Google

known as the good citizen. He wore gravity like an ornament. None could more nicely represent the desired character as an appointed chief, the outpost of civilisation and reform. And yet, were the French to go and native manners to revive, fancy beholds him crowned with old men's beards and crowding with the first to a man-eating festival. But I must not seem to be unjust to Paaaeua. His respectability went deeper than the skin; his sense of the becoming sometimes nerved him for unexpected rigours.

One evening Captain Otis and Mr. Osbourne were on shore in the village. All was agog; dancing had begun; it was plain it was to be a night of festival, and our adventurers were overjoyed at their good fortune. A strong fall of rain drove them for shelter to the house of Paaaeua, where they were made welcome, wiled into a chamber, and shut in. Presently the rain took off, the fun was to begin in earnest, and the young bloods of Atuona came round the house and called to my fellow-travellers through the interstices of the wall. Late into the night the calls were continued and resumed, and sometimes mingled with taunts; late into the night the prisoners, tantalised by the noises of the festival, renewed their efforts to escape. But all was vain; right across the door lay that god-fearing householder, Paaaeua, feigning sleep; and my friends had to forgo their junketing. In this incident, so delightfully European, we thought

Digitized by Google

we could detect three strands of sentiment. In the first place, Paaaeua had a charge of souls: these were young men, and he judged it right to withhold them from the primrose path. Secondly, he was a public character, and it was not fitting that his guests should countenance a festival of which he disapproved. So might some strict clergyman at home address a worldly visitor: "Go to the theatre if you like, but, by your leave, not from my house!" Thirdly, Paaaeua was a man jealous and with some cause (as shall be shown) for jealousy; and the feasters were the satellites of his immediate rival, Moipu.

For the adoption had caused much excitement in the village; it made the strangers popular. Paaaeua, in his difficult posture of appointed chief, drew strength and dignity from their alliance, and only Moipu and his followers were malcontent. For some reason, nobody (except myself) appears to dislike Moipu. Captain Hart, who has been robbed and threatened by him; Father Orens, whom he has fired at, and repeatedly driven to the woods; my own family, and even the French officials—all seemed smitten with an irrepressible affection for the man. His fall had been made soft; his son, upon his death, was to succeed Paaaeua in the chieftaincy; and he lived, at the time of our visit, in the shoreward part of the village in a good house, and with a strong following of young men, his late braves and pot-hunters. In this society, the coming of

Digitized by Google

the *Casco*, the adoption, the return feast on board, and the presents exchanged between the whites and their new parents, were doubtless eagerly and bitterly canvassed. It was felt that a few years ago the honours would have gone elsewhere. In this unwonted business, in this reception of some hitherto undreamed-of and outlandish potentate—some Prester John or old Assaracus—a few years back it would have been the part of Moipu to play the hero and the host, and his young men would have accompanied and adorned the various celebrations as the acknowledged leaders of society. And now, by a malign vicissitude of fortune, Moipu must sit in his house quite unobserved; and his young men could but look in at the door the while their rivals feasted. Perhaps M. Grévy felt a touch of bitterness towards his successor when he beheld him figure on the broad stage of the centenary of eighty-nine; the visit of the *Casco* which Moipu had missed by so few years was a more unusual occasion in Atuona than a centenary in France; and the dethroned chief determined to reassert himself in the public eye.

Mr. Osbourne had gone into Atuona photographing; the population of the village had gathered together for the occasion on the place before the church, and Paaaeua, highly delighted with this new appearance of his family, played the master of ceremonies. The church had been taken, with its jolly architect before the door;

Digitized by Google

the nuns with their pupils; sundry damsels in the ancient and singularly unbecoming robes of tapa; and Father Orens in the midst of a group of his parishioners. I know not what else was at hand, when the photographer became aware of a sensation in the crowd, and, looking around, beheld a very noble figure of a man appear upon the margin of a thicket and stroll nonchalantly near. The nonchalance was visibly affected; it was plain he came there to arouse attention, and his success was instant. He was introduced; he was civil, he was obliging, he was always ineffably superior and certain of himself; a well-graced actor. It was presently suggested that he should appear in his war costume; he gracefully consented; and returned in that strange, inappropriate, and ill-omened array (which very well became his handsome person) to strut in a circle of admirers, and be thenceforth the centre of photography. Thus had Moipu effected his introduction, as by accident, to the white strangers, made it a favour to display his finery, and reduced his rival to a secondary *rôle* on the theatre of the disputed village. Paaaeua felt the blow; and, with a spirit which we never dreamed he could possess, asserted his priority. It was found impossible that day to get a photograph of Moipu alone; for whenever he stood up before the camera his successor placed himself unbidden by his side, and gently but firmly held to his position. The portraits of the pair, Jacob and

Digitized by Google

Esau, standing shoulder to shoulder, one in his careful European dress, one in his barbaric trappings, figure the past and present of their island. A graveyard with its humble crosses would be the aptest symbol of the future.

We are all impressed with the belief that Moipu had planned his campaign from the beginning to the end. It is certain that he lost no time in pushing his advantage. Mr. Osbourne was inveigled to his house; various gifts were fished out of an old sea-chest; Father Orens was called into service as interpreter, and Moipu formally proposed to "make brothers" with Mata-Galahi —Glass-Eyes,—the not very euphonious name under which Mr. Osbourne passed in the Marquesas. The feast of brotherhood took place on board the *Casco*. Paaaeua had arrived with his family, like a plain man; and his presents, which had been numerous, had followed one another, at intervals through several days. Moipu, as if to mark at every point the opposition, came with a certain feudal pomp tended by retainers bearing gifts of all descriptions, from plumes of old men's beard to little, pious, Catholic engravings.

I had met the man before this in the village, and detested him on sight; there was something indescribably raffish in his looks and ways that raised my gorge; and when man-eating was referred to, and he laughed a low, cruel laugh, part boastful, part bashful, like one reminded of some dashing peccadillo, my repugnance was mingled

Digitized by Google

with nausea. This is no very human attitude, nor one at all becoming in a traveller. And, seen more privately, the man improved. Something negroid in character and face was still displeasing, but his ugly mouth became attractive when he smiled, his figure and bearing were certainly noble, and his eyes superb. In his appreciation of jams and pickles, in his delight in the reverberating mirrors of the dining cabin, and consequent endless repetition of Moipus and Mata-Galahis, he showed himself engagingly a child. And yet I am not sure; and what seemed childishness may have been rather courtly art. His manners struck me as beyond the mark; they were refined and caressing to the point of grossness, and when I think of the serene absent-mindedness with which he first strolled in upon our party, and then recall him running on hands and knees along the cabin sofas, pawing the velvet, dipping into the beds, and bleating commendatory "*mitais*" with exaggerated emphasis like some enormous over-mannered ape, I feel the more sure that both must have been calculated. And I sometimes wonder next, if Moipu were quite alone in this polite duplicity, and ask myself whether the *Casco* were quite so much admired in the Marquesas as our visitors desired us to suppose.

I will complete the sketch of an incurable cannibal grandee with two incongruous traits. His favourite morsel was the human hand, of

Digitized by Google

which he speaks to-day with an ill-favoured lustfulness. And when he said good-bye to Mrs. Stevenson, holding her hand, viewing her with tearful eyes, and chanting his farewell improvisation in the falsetto of Marquesan high society, he wrote upon her mind a sentimental impression which I try in vain to share.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PART II

THE PAUMOTUS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

THE DANGEROUS ARCHIPELAGO — ATOLLS AT A DISTANCE

IN the early morning of 4th September a whale-boat manned by natives dragged us down the green lane of the anchorage and round the spouting promontory. On the shore level it was a hot, breathless, and yet crystal morning; but high overhead the hills of Atuona were all cowled in cloud, and the ocean-river of the trades streamed without pause. As we crawled from under the immediate shelter of the land, we reached at last the limit of their influence. The wind fell upon our sails in puffs, which strengthened and grew more continuous; presently the *Casco* heeled down to her day's work; the whale-boat, quite outstripped, clung for a noisy moment to her quarter; the stipulated bread, rum, and tobacco were passed in; a moment more and the boat was in our wake, and our late pilots were cheering our departure.

This was the more inspiriting as we were bound for scenes so different, and though on a brief voyage, yet for a new province of crea-

Digitized by Google

tion. That wide field of ocean, called loosely the South Seas, extends from tropic to tropic, and from perhaps 120 degrees W. to 150 degrees E., a parallelogram of one hundred degrees by forty-seven, where degrees are the most spacious. Much of it lies vacant, much is closely sown with isles, and the isles are of two sorts. No distinction is so continually dwelt upon in South Sea talk as that between the "low" and the "high" islands, and there is none more broadly marked in nature. The Himalayas are not more different from the Sahara. On the one hand, and chiefly in groups of from eight to a dozen, volcanic islands rise above the sea; few reach an altitude of less than 4,000 feet; one exceeds 13,000; their tops are often obscured in cloud, they are all clothed with various forests, all abound in food, and are all remarkable for picturesque and solemn scenery. On the other hand, we have the atoll; a thing of problematic origin and history, the reputed creature of an insect apparently unidentified; rudely annular in shape; enclosing a lagoon; rarely extending beyond a quarter of a mile at its chief width; often rising at its highest point to less than the stature of a man—man himself, the rat and the land crab, its chief inhabitants; not more variously supplied with plants; an offering to the eye, even when perfect, only a ring of glittering beach and verdant foliage, enclosing and enclosed by the blue sea.

Digitized by Google

In no quarter are the atolls so thickly congregated, in none are they so varied in size from the greatest to the least, and in none is navigation so beset with perils, as in that archipelago that we were now to thread. The huge system of the trades is, for some reason, quite confounded by this multiplicity of reefs; the wind intermits, squalls are frequent from the west and southwest, hurricanes are known. The currents are, besides, inextricably intermixed; dead reckoning becomes a farce; the charts are not to be trusted; and such is the number and similarity of these islands that, even when you have picked one up, you may be none the wiser. The reputation of the place is consequently infamous; insurance offices exclude it from their field, and it was not without misgiving that my captain risked the *Casco* in such waters. I believe, indeed, it is almost understood that yachts are to avoid this baffling archipelago; and it required all my instances—and all Mr. Otis's private taste for adventure—to deflect our course across its midst.

For a few days we sailed with a steady trade, and a steady westerly current setting us to leeward; and toward sundown of the seventh it was supposed we should have sighted Takaroa, one of Cook's so-called King George Islands. The sun set; yet a while longer the old moon—semi-brilliant herself, and with a silver belly, which was her successor—sailed among gathering

Digitized by Google

clouds; she, too, deserted us; stars of every degree of sheen, and clouds of every variety of form disputed the sub-lustrous night; and still we gazed in vain for Takaroa. The mate stood on the bowsprit, his tall grey figure slashing up and down against the stars, and still

"nihil astra præter
Vidit et undas."

The rest of us were grouped at the port anchor davit, staring with no less assiduity, but with far less hope on the obscure horizon. Islands we beheld in plenty, but they were of "such stuff as dreams are made on," and vanished at a wink, only to appear in other places; and by and by not only islands, but refulgent and revolving lights began to stud the darkness; light-houses of the mind or of the wearied optic nerve, solemnly shining and winking as we passed. At length the mate himself despaired, scrambled on board again from his unrestful perch, and announced that we had missed our destination. He was the only man of practice in these waters, our sole pilot, shipped for that end at Tai-o-hae. If he declared we had missed Takaroa, it was not for us to quarrel with the fact, but, if we could, to explain it. We had certainly run down our southing. Our canted wake upon the sea and our somewhat drunken-looking course upon the chart both testified with no less certainty to an impetuous westward current. We had no choice

Digitized by Google

but to conclude we were again set down to leeward; and the best we could do was to bring the *Casco* to the wind, keep a good watch, and expect morning.

I slept that night, as was then my somewhat dangerous practice, on deck upon the cockpit bench. A stir at last awoke me, to see all the eastern heaven dyed with faint orange, the binnacle lamp already dulled against the brightness of the day, and the steersman leaning eagerly across the wheel. "There it is, sir!" he cried, and pointed in the very eyeball of the dawn. For a while I could see nothing but the bluish ruins of the morning bank, which lay far along the horizon, like melting icebergs. Then the sun rose, pierced a gap in these *débris* of vapours, and displayed an inconsiderable islet, flat as a plate upon the sea, and spiked with palms of disproportioned altitude.

So far, so good. Here was certainly an atoll; and we were certainly got among the archipelago. But which? And where? The isle was too small for either Takaroa: in all our neighbourhood, indeed, there was none so inconsiderable, save only Tikei; and Tikei, one of Roggewein's so-called Pernicious Islands, seemed beside the question. At that rate, instead of drifting to the west, we must have fetched up thirty miles to windward. And how about the current? It had been setting us down, by observation, all these days: by the deflection of

Digitized by Google

our wake, it should be setting us down that moment. When had it stopped? When had it begun again? and what kind of torrent was that which had swept us eastward in the interval? To these questions, so typical of navigation in that range of isles, I have no answer. Such were at least the facts; Tikei our island turned out to be; and it was our first experience of the dangerous archipelago, to make our landfall thirty miles out.

The sight of Tikei, thrown direct against the splendour of the morning, robbed of all its colour, and deformed with disproportioned trees like bristles on a broom, had scarce prepared us to be much in love with atolls. Later the same day we saw under more fit conditions the island of Taiaro. *Lost in the Sea* is possibly the meaning of the name. And it was so we saw it; lost in blue sea and sky: a ring of white beach, green underwood, and tossing palms, gem-like in colour; of a fairy, of a heavenly prettiness. The surf ran all around it, white as snow, and broke at one point, far to seaward, on what seems an uncharted reef. There was no smoke, no sign of man; indeed, the isle is not inhabited, only visited at intervals. And yet a trader (Mr. Narii Salmon) was watching from the shore and wondering at the unexpected ship. I have spent since then long months upon low islands; I know the tedium of their undistinguished days; I know the burden of their diet. With what-

Digitized by Google

ever envy we may have looked from the deck on these green coverts, it was with a tenfold greater that Mr. Salmon and his comrades saw us steer, in our trim ship, to seaward.

The night fell lovely in the extreme. After the moon went down, the heaven was a thing to wonder at for stars. And as I lay in the cockpit and looked upon the steersman I was haunted by Emerson's verses:

> "And the lone seaman all the night
> Sails astonished among stars."

By this glittering and imperfect brightness, about four bells in the first watch we made our third atoll, Raraka. The low line of the isle lay straight along the sky; so that I was at first reminded of a tow-path, and we seemed to be mounting some engineered and navigable stream. Presently a red star appeared, about the height and brightness of a danger-signal, and with that my simile was changed; we seemed rather to skirt the embankment of a railway, and the eye began to look instinctively for the telegraph posts, and the ear to expect the coming of a train. Here and there, but rarely, faint tree-tops broke the level. And the sound of the surf accompanied us, now in a drowsy monotone, now with a menacing swing.

The isle lay nearly east and west, barring our advance on Fakarava. We must, therefore, hug the coast until we gained the western end,

Digitized by Google

where, through a passage eight miles wide, we might sail southward between Raraka and the next isle, Kauehi. We had the wind free, a lightish air; but clouds of an inky blackness were beginning to rise, and at times it lightened—without thunder. Something, I know not what, continually set us up upon the island. We lay more and more to the nor'ard, and you would have thought the shore copied our manœuvre and outsailed us. Once and twice Raraka headed us again—again, in the sea fashion, the quite innocent steersman was abused—and again the *Casco* kept away. Had I been called on, with no more light than that of our experience, to draw the configuration of that island, I should have shown a series of bow-window promontories, each overlapping the other to the nor'ard, and the trend of the land from the south-east to the north-west, and behold, on the chart it lay near east and west in a straight line.

We had but just repeated our manœuvre and kept away—for not more than five minutes the railway embankment had been lost to view and the surf to hearing—when I was aware of land again, not only on the weather bow, but dead ahead. I played the part of the judicious landsman, holding my peace till the last moment; and presently my mariners perceived it for themselves.

"Land ahead!" said the steersman.

"By God, it's Kauehi!" cried the mate.

Digitized by Google

And so it was. And with that I began to be sorry for cartographers. We were scarce doing three and a half; and they asked me to believe that (in five minutes) we had dropped an island, passed eight miles of open water, and run almost high and dry upon the next. But my captain was more sorry for himself to be afloat in such a labyrinth; laid the *Casco* to, with the log-line up and down, and sat on the stern rail and watched it till the morning. He had enough of night in the Paumotus.

By daylight on the 9th we began to skirt Kauehi, and had now an opportunity to see near at hand the geography of atolls. Here and there, where it was high, the farther side loomed up; here and there the near side dipped entirely and showed a broad path of water into the lagoon; here and there both sides were equally abased, and we could look right through the discontinuous ring to the sea horizon on the south. Conceive, on a vast scale, the submerged hoop of the duck-hunter, trimmed with green rushes to conceal his head—water within, water without—you have the image of the perfect atoll. Conceive one that has been partly plucked of its rush fringe; you have the atoll of Kauehi. And for either shore of it at closer quarters, conceive the line of some old Roman highway traversing a wet morass, and here sunk out of view and there re-arising, crowned with a green tuft of thicket; only instead of the stagnant waters of a marsh,

Digitized by Google

the live ocean now boiled against, now buried the frail barrier. Last night's impression in the dark was thus confirmed by day, and not corrected. We sailed indeed by a mere causeway in the sea, of nature's handiwork, yet of no greater magnitude than many of the works of man.

The isle was uninhabited; it was all green brush and white sand, set in transcendently blue water; even the coco-palms were rare, though some of these completed the bright harmony of colour by hanging out a fan of golden yellow. For long there was no sign of life beyond the vegetable, and no sound but the continuous grumble of the surf. In silence and desertion these fair shores slipped past, and were submerged and rose again with clumps of thicket from the sea. And then a bird or two appeared, hovering and crying; swiftly these became more numerous, and presently, looking ahead, we were aware of a vast effervescence of winged life. In this place the annular isle was mostly under water, carrying here and there on its submerged line a wooded islet. Over one of these the birds hung and flew with an incredible density like that of gnats or hiving bees; the mass flashed white and black, and heaved and quivered, and the screaming of the creatures rose over the voice of the surf in a shrill clattering whirr. As you descend some inland valley a not dissimilar sound announces the nearness of

Digitized by Google

a mill and pouring river. Some stragglers, as I said, came to meet our approach; a few still hung about the ship as we departed. The crying died away, the last pair of wings was left behind, and once more the low shores of Kauehi streamed past our eyes in silence like a picture. I supposed at the time that the birds lived, like ants or citizens, concentred where we saw them. I have been told since (I know not if correctly) that the whole isle, or much of it, is similarly peopled; and that the effervescence at a single spot would be the mark of a boat's crew of egg-hunters from one of the neighbouring inhabited atolls. So that here at Kauehi, as the day before at Taiaro, the *Casco* sailed by under the fire of unsuspected eyes. And one thing is surely true, that even on these ribbons of land an army might lie hid and no passing mariner divine its presence.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

FAKARAVA: AN ATOLL AT HAND

BY a little before noon we were running down the coast of our destination, Fakarava: the air very light, the sea near smooth; though still we were accompanied by a continuous murmur from the beach, like the sound of a distant train. The isle is of a huge longitude, the enclosed lagoon thirty miles by ten or twelve, and the coral tow-path, which they call the land, some eighty or ninety miles by (possibly) one furlong. That part by which we sailed was all raised; the underwood excellently green, the topping wood of coco-palms continuous—a mark, if I had known it, of man's intervention. For once more, and once more unconsciously, we were within hail of fellow-creatures, and that vacant beach was but a pistol-shot from the capital city of the archipelago. But the life of an atoll, unless it be enclosed, passes wholly on the shores of the lagoon; it is there the villages are seated, there the canoes ply and are drawn up; and the beach of the ocean is a place accursed and deserted, the fit scene only for wizardry and shipwreck, and

Digitized by Google

in the native belief a haunting ground of murderous spectres.

By and by we might perceive a breach in the low barrier; the woods ceased; a glittering point ran into the sea, tipped with an emerald shoal, the mark of entrance. As we drew near we met a little run of sea—the private sea of the lagoon having there its origin and end, and here, in the jaws of the gateway, trying vain conclusions with the more majestic heave of the Pacific. The *Casco* scarce avowed a shock; but there are times and circumstances when these harbour mouths of inland basins vomit floods, deflecting, burying, and dismasting ships. For, conceive a lagoon perfectly sealed but in the one point, and that of merely navigable width; conceive the tide and wind to have heaped for hours together in that coral fold a superfluity of waters, and the tide to change and the wind fall—the open sluice of some great reservoirs at home will give an image of the unstemmable effluxion.

We were scarce well headed for the pass before all heads were craned over the rail. For the water, shoaling under our board, became changed in a moment to surprising hues of blue and grey; and in its transparency the coral branched and blossomed, and the fish of the inland sea cruised visibly below us, stained and striped, and even beaked like parrots. I have paid in my time to view many curiosities; never one so curious as that first sight over the ship's

Digitized by Google

rail in the lagoon of Fakarava. But let not the reader be deceived with hope. I have since entered, I suppose, some dozen atolls in different parts of the Pacific, and the experience has never been repeated. That exquisite hue and transparency of submarine day, and these shoals of rainbow fish, have not enraptured me again.

Before we could raise our eyes from that engaging spectacle, the schooner had slipped betwixt the pierheads of the reef, and was already quite committed to the sea within. The containing shores are so little erected, and the lagoon itself is so great, that, for the more part, it seemed to extend without a check to the horizon. Here and there, indeed, where the reef carried an inlet, like a signet-ring upon a finger, there would be a pencilling of palms; here and there, the green wall of wood ran solid for a length of miles; and on the port hand, under the highest grove of trees, a few houses sparkled white—Rotoava, the metropolitan settlement of the Paumotus. Hither we beat in three tacks, and came to an anchor close in shore, in the first smooth water since we had left San Francisco, five fathoms deep, where a man might look overboard all day at the vanishing cable, the coral patches, and the many-coloured fish.

Fakarava was chosen to be the seat of Government from nautical considerations only. It is eccentrically situate; the productions, even for a low island, poor; the population neither many

Digitized by Google

nor—for Low Islanders—industrious. But the lagoon has two good passages, one to leeward, one to windward, so that in all states of the wind it can be left and entered, and this advantage, for a government of scattered islands, was decisive. A pier of coral, landing-stairs, a harbour light upon a staff and pillar, and two spacious Government bungalows in a handsome fence, give to the northern end of Rotoava a great air of consequence. This is confirmed on the one hand by an empty prison, on the other by a gendarmerie pasted over with hand-bills in Tahitian, land-law notices from Papeete, and republican sentiments from Paris, signed (a little after date) "Jules Grévy, *Perihidente.*" Quite at the far end a belfried Catholic chapel concludes the town; and between, on a smooth floor of white coral sand and under the breezy canopy of coco-palms, the houses of the natives stand irregularly scattered, now close on the lagoon for the sake of the breeze, now back under the palms for love of shadow.

Not a soul was to be seen. But for the thunder of the surf on the far side, it seemed you might have heard a pin drop anywhere about that capital city. There was something thrilling in the unexpected silence, something yet more so in the unexpected sound. Here before us a sea reached to the horizon, rippling like an inland mere; and behold! close at our back another sea assaulted with assiduous fury the re-

Digitized by Google

verse of the position. At night the lantern was run up and lit a vacant pier. In one house lights were seen and voices heard, where the population (I was told) sat playing cards. A little beyond, from deep in the darkness of the palm grove, we saw the glow and smelt the aromatic odour of a coal of cocoa-nut husk, a relic of the evening kitchen. Crickets sang; some shrill thing whistled in a tuft of weeds; and the mosquito hummed and stung. There was no other trace that night of man, bird, or insect in the isle. The moon, now three days old, and as yet but a silver crescent on a still visible sphere, shone through the palm canopy with vigorous and scattered lights. The alleys where we walked were smoothed and weeded like a boulevard; here and there were plants set out; here and there dusky cottages clustered in the shadow, some with verandahs. A public garden by night, a rich and fashionable watering-place in a by-season, offer sights and vistas not dissimilar. And still, on the one side, stretched the lapping mere, and from the other the deep sea still growled in the night. But it was most of all on board, in the dead hours, when I had been better sleeping, that the spell of Fakarava seized and held me. The moon was down. The harbour lantern and two of the greater planets drew varicoloured wakes on the lagoon. From shore the cheerful watch-cry of cocks rang out at intervals above the organ-point of surf. And the thought

Digitized by Google

of this depopulated capital, this protracted thread of annular island with its crest of coco-palms and fringe of breakers, and that tranquil inland sea that stretched before me till it touched the stars, ran in my head for hours with delight.

So long as I stayed upon that isle these thoughts were constant. I lay down to sleep, and woke again with an unblunted sense of my surroundings. I was never weary of calling up the image of that narrow causeway, on which I had my dwelling, lying coiled like a serpent, tail to mouth, in the outrageous ocean, and I was never weary of passing—a mere quarter-deck parade—from the one side to the other, from the shady, habitable shores of the lagoon to the blinding desert and uproarious breakers of the opposite beach. The sense of insecurity in such a thread of residence is more than fanciful. Hurricanes and tidal waves overleap these humble obstacles; Oceanus remembers his strength, and, where houses stood and palms flourished, shakes his white beard again over the barren coral. Fakarava itself has suffered; the trees immediately beyond my house were all of recent replantation; and Anaa is only now recovered from a heavier stroke. I knew one who was then dwelling in the isle. He told me that he and two ship captains walked to the sea beach. There for a while they viewed the on-coming breakers, till one of the captains clapped sud-

Digitized by Google

denly his hand before his eyes and cried aloud that he could endure no longer to behold them. This was in the afternoon; in the dark hours of the night the sea burst upon the island like a flood; the settlement was razed, all but the church and presbytery; and, when day returned, the survivors saw themselves clinging in an abattis of uprooted coco-palms and ruined houses.

Danger is but a small consideration. But men are more nicely sensible of a discomfort; and the atoll is a discomfortable home. There are some, and these probably ancient, where a deep soil has formed and the most valuable fruit-trees prosper. I have walked in one, with equal admiration and surprise, through a forest of huge breadfruits, eating bananas and stumbling among taro as I went. This was in the atoll of Namorik in the Marshall group, and stands alone in my experience. To give the opposite extreme, which is yet far more near the average, I will describe the soil and productions of Fakarava. The surface of that narrow strip is for the more part of broken coral limestone, like volcanic clinkers, and excruciating to the naked foot; in some atolls, I believe, not in Fakarava, it gives a fine metallic ring when struck. Here and there you come upon a bank of sand exceeding fine and white, and these parts are the least productive. The plants (such as they are) spring from and love the broken coral, whence they grow with that wonderful verdancy that

Digitized by Google

makes the beauty of the atoll from the sea. The coco-palm in particular luxuriates in that stern *solum*, striking down his roots to the brackish, percolated water, and bearing his green head in the wind with every evidence of health and pleasure. And yet even the coco-palm must be helped in infancy with some extraneous nutriment, and through much of the low archipelago there is planted with each nut a piece of ship's biscuit and a rusty nail. The pandanus comes next in importance, being also a food tree; and he, too, does bravely. A green bush called *miki* runs everywhere; occasionally a purao is seen; and there are several useless weeds. According to M. Cuzent, the whole number of plants on an atoll such as Fakarava will scarce exceed, even if it reaches to, one score. Not a blade of grass appears; not a grain of humus, save when a sack or two has been imported to make the semblance of a garden; such gardens as bloom in cities on the window-sill. Insect life is sometimes dense; a cloud of mosquitoes, and, what is far worse, a plague of flies blackening our food, have sometimes driven us from a meal on Apemama; and even in Fakarava the mosquitoes were a pest. The land crab may be seen scuttling to his hole, and at night the rats besiege the houses and the artificial gardens. The crab is good eating; possibly so is the rat; I have not tried. Pandanus fruit is made, in the Gilberts, into an agreeable sweetmeat, such as

Digitized by Google

a man may trifle with at the end of a long dinner; for a substantial meal I have no use for it. The rest of the food-supply, in a destitute atoll such as Fakarava, can be summed up in the favourite jest of the archipelago—cocoa-nut beef-steak. Cocoa-nut green, cocoa-nut ripe, cocoa-nut germinated; cocoa-nut to eat and cocoa-nut to drink; cocoa-nut raw and cooked, cocoa-nut hot and cold—such is the bill of fare. And some of the entrées are no doubt delicious. The germinated nut, cooked in the shell and eaten with a spoon, forms a good pudding; cocoa-nut milk,—the expressed juice of a ripe nut, not the water of a green one—goes well in coffee, and is a valuable adjunct in cookery through the South Seas; and cocoa-nut salad, if you be a millionaire, and can afford to eat the value of a field of corn for your dessert, is a dish to be remembered with affection. But when all is done there is a sameness, and the Israelites of the low islands murmur at their manna.

The reader may think I have forgot the sea. The two beaches do certainly abound in life, and they are strangely different. In the lagoon the water shallows slowly on a bottom of fine slimy sand, dotted with clumps of growing coral. Then comes a strip of tidal beach on which the ripples lap. In the coral clumps the great holy-water clam (*Tridacna*) grows plentifully; a little deeper lie the beds of the pearl-oyster and sail the resplendent fish that charmed us at our en-

Digitized by Google

trance; and these are all more or less vigorously coloured. But the other shells are white like lime, or faintly tinted with a little pink, the palest possible display; many of them dead besides, and badly rolled. On the ocean side, on the mounds of the steep beach, over all the width of the reef right out to where the surf is bursting, in every cranny, under every scattered fragment of the coral, an incredible plenty of marine life displays the most wonderful variety and brilliancy of hues. The reef itself has no passage of colour but is imitated by some shell. Purple and red and white, and green and yellow, pied and striped and clouded, the living shells wear in every combination the livery of the dead reef —if the reef be dead—so that the eye is continually baffled and the collector continually deceived. I have taken shells for stones and stones for shells, the one as often as the other. A prevailing character of the coral is to be dotted with small spots of red, and it is wonderful how many varieties of shell have adopted the same fashion and donned the disguise of the red spot. A shell I had found in plenty in the Marquesas I found here also unchanged in all things else, but there were the red spots. A lively little crab wore the same marking. The case of the hermit or soldier crab was more conclusive, being the result of conscious choice. This nasty little wrecker, scavenger, and squatter has learned the value of a spotted house; so it be of the right colour he

Digitized by Google

will choose the smallest shard, tuck himself in a mere corner of a broken whorl, and go about the world half naked; but I never found him in this imperfect armour unless it was marked with the red spot.

Some two hundred yards distant is the beach of the lagoon. Collect the shells from each, set them side by side, and you would suppose they came from different hemispheres; the one so pale, the other so brilliant; the one prevalently white, the other of a score of hues, and infected with the scarlet spot like a disease. This seems the more strange, since the hermit crabs pass and repass the island, and I have met them by the Residency well, which is about central, journeying either way. Without doubt many of the shells in the lagoon are dead. But why are they dead? Without doubt the living shells have a very different background set for imitation. But why are these so different? We are only on the threshold of the mysteries.

Either beach, I have said, abounds with life. On the sea-side and in certain atolls this profusion of vitality is even shocking: the rock under foot is mined with it. I have broken off—notably in Funafuti and Arorai[1]—great lumps of ancient weathered rock that rang under my blows like iron, and the fracture has been full of pendent worms as long as my hand, as thick as a child's finger, of a slightly pinkish white, and set

[1]Arorai is in the Gilberts, Funafuti in the Ellice Islands.—Ed.

Digitized by Google

as close as three or even four to the square inch. Even in the lagoon, where certain shell-fish seem to sicken, others (it is notorious) prosper exceedingly and make the riches of these islands. Fish, too, abound; the lagoon is a closed fish-pond, such as might rejoice the fancy of an abbot; sharks swarm there, and chiefly round the passages, to feast upon this plenty, and you would suppose that man had only to prepare his angle. Alas! it is not so. Of those painted fish that came in hordes about the entering *Casco*, some bore poisonous spines, and others were poisonous if eaten. The stranger must refrain, or take his chance of painful and dangerous sickness. The native, on his own isle, is a safe guide; transplant him to the next, and he is helpless as yourself. For it is a question both of time and place. A fish caught in a lagoon may be deadly; the same fish caught the same day at sea, and only a few hundred yards without the passage, will be wholesome eating: in a neighbouring isle perhaps the case will be reversed; and perhaps a fortnight later you shall be able to eat of them indifferently from within and from without. According to the natives, these bewildering vicissitudes are ruled by the movement of the heavenly bodies. The beautiful planet Venus plays a great part in all island tales and customs; and among other functions, some of them more awful, she regulates the season of good fish. With Venus in one phase, as

Digitized by Google

we had her, certain fish were poisonous in the lagoon: with Venus in another, the same fish was harmless and a valued article of diet. White men explain these changes by the phases of the coral.

It adds a last touch of horror to the thought of this precarious annular gangway in the sea, that even what there is of it is not of honest rock, but organic, part alive, part putrescent; even the clean sea and the bright fish about it poisoned, the most stubborn boulder burrowed in by worms, the lightest dust venomous as an apothecary's drugs.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

A HOUSE TO LET IN A LOW ISLAND

NEVER populous, it was yet by a chapter of accidents that I found the island so deserted that no sound of human life diversified the hours; that we walked in that trim public garden of a town, among closed houses, without even a lodging-bill in a window to prove some tenancy in the back quarters; and, when we visited the Government bungalow, that Mr. Donat, acting Vice-Resident, greeted us alone, and entertained us with cocoa-nut punches in the Sessions Hall and seat of judgment of that widespread archipelago, our glasses standing arrayed with summonses and census returns. The unpopularity of a late Vice-Resident had begun the movement of exodus, his native employés resigning court appointments and retiring each to his own coco-patch in the remoter districts of the isle. Upon the back of that, the Governor in Papeete issued a decree: All land in the Paumotus must be defined and registered by a certain date. Now, the folk of the archipelago are half nomadic; a

Digitized by Google

man can scarce be said to belong to a particular atoll; he belongs to several, perhaps holds a stake and counts cousinship in half a score; and the inhabitants of Rotoava in particular, man, woman, and child, and from the gendarme to the Mormon prophet and the schoolmaster, owned—I was going to say land—owned at least coral blocks and growing coco-palms in some adjacent isle. Thither—from the gendarme to the babe in arms, the pastor followed by his flock, the schoolmaster carrying along with him his scholars, and the scholars with their books and slates—they had taken ship some two days previous to our arrival, and were all now engaged disputing boundaries. Fancy overhears the shrillness of their disputation mingle with the surf and scatter sea-fowl. It was admirable to observe the completeness of their flight, like that of hibernating birds; nothing left but empty houses, like old nests to be reoccupied in spring; and even the harmless necessary dominie borne with them in their transmigration. Fifty-odd set out, and only seven, I was informed, remained. But when I made a feast on board the *Casco*, more than seven, and nearer seven times seven, appeared to be my guests. Whence they appeared, how they were summoned, whither they vanished when the feast was eaten, I have no guess. In view of Low Island tales, and that awful frequentation which makes men avoid the seaward beaches of an atoll, some two score of those that ate with us

Digitized by Google

may have returned, for the occasion, from the kingdom of the dead.

It was this solitude that put it in our minds to hire a house, and become, for the time being, indwellers of the isle—a practice I have ever since, when it was possible, adhered to. Mr. Donat placed us, with that intent, under the convoy of one Taniera Mahinui, who combined the incongruous characters of catechist and convict. The reader may smile, but I affirm he was well qualified for either part. For that of convict, first of all, by a good substantial felony, such as in all lands casts the perpetrator in chains and dungeons. Taniera was a man of birth—the chief a while ago, as he loved to tell, of a district in Anaa of 800 souls. In an evil hour it occurred to the authorities in Papeete to charge the chiefs with the collection of the taxes. It is a question if much were collected; it is certain that nothing was handed on; and Taniera, who had distinguished himself by a visit to Papeete and some high living in restaurants, was chosen for the scapegoat. The reader must understand that not Taniera but the authorities in Papeete were first in fault. The charge imposed was disproportioned. I have not yet heard of any Polynesian capable of such a burden; honest and upright Hawaiians—one in particular, who was admired even by the whites as an inflexible magistrate—have stumbled in the narrow path of the trustee. And Taniera,

Digitized by Google

when the pinch came, scorned to denounce accomplices; others had shared the spoil, he bore the penalty alone. He was condemned in five years. The period, when I had the pleasure of his friendship, was not yet expired; he still drew prison rations, the sole and not unwelcome reminder of his chains, and, I believed, looked forward to the date of his enfranchisement with mere alarm. For he had no sense of shame in the position; complained of nothing but the defective table of his place of exile; regretted nothing but the fowls and eggs and fish of his own more favoured island. And as for his parishioners, they did not think one hair the less of him. A schoolboy, mulcted in ten thousand lines of Greek and dwelling sequestered in the dormitories, enjoys unabated consideration from his fellows. So with Taniera: a marked man, not a dishonoured; having fallen under the lash of the unthinkable gods; a Job, perhaps, or say a Taniera in the den of lions. Songs are likely made and sung about this saintly Robin Hood. On the other hand, he was even highly qualified for his office in the Church; being by nature a grave, considerate, and kindly man; his face rugged and serious, his smile bright; the master of several trades, a builder both of boats and houses; endowed with a fine pulpit voice; endowed besides with such a gift of eloquence that at the grave of the late chief of Fakarava he set all the assistants weeping. I never met a man

Digitized by Google

of a mind more ecclesiastical; he loved to dispute and to inform himself of doctrine and the history of sects; and when I showed him the cuts in a volume of Chambers's *Encyclopædia*—except for one of an ape—reserved his whole enthusiasm for cardinals' hats, censers, candlesticks, and cathedrals. Methought when he looked upon the cardinal's hat a voice said low in his ear: "Your foot is on the ladder."

Under the guidance of Taniera we were soon installed in what I believe to have been the best appointed private house in Fakarava. It stood just beyond the church in an oblong patch of cultivation. More than three hundred sacks of soil were imported from Tahiti for the Residency garden; and this must shortly be renewed, for the earth blows away, sinks in crevices of the coral, and is sought for at last in vain. I know not how much earth had gone to the garden of my villa; some at least, for an alley of prosperous bananas ran to the gate, and over the rest of the enclosure, which was covered with the usual clinker-like fragments of smashed coral, not only coco-palms and mikis but also fig-trees flourished, all of a delicious greenness. Of course there was no blade of grass. In front a picket fence divided us from the white road, the palm-fringed margin of the lagoon, and the lagoon itself, reflecting clouds by day and stars by night. At the back, a bulwark of uncemented coral enclosed us from the narrow belt of bush and the

Digitized by Google

nigh ocean beach where the seas thundered, the roar and wash of them still humming in the chambers of the house.

This itself was of one story, verandahed front and back. It contained three rooms, three sewing-machines, three sea-chests, chairs, tables, a pair of beds, a cradle, a double-barrelled gun, a pair of enlarged coloured photographs, a pair of coloured prints after Wilkie and Mulready, and a French lithograph with the legend: "*Le brigade du Général Lepasset brûlant son drapeau devant Metz.*" Under the stilts of the house a stove was rusting, till we drew it forth and put it in commission. Not far off was the burrow in the coral whence we supplied ourselves with brackish water. There was live-stock, besides, on the estate—cocks and hens and a brace of ill-regulated cats, whom Taniera came every morning with the sun to feed on grated cocoa-nut. His voice was our regular réveillé, ringing pleasantly about the garden: "Pooty—pooty—poo—poo—poo!"

Far as we were from the public offices, the nearness of the chapel made our situation what is called eligible in advertisements, and gave us a side look on some native life. Every morning, as soon as he had fed the fowls, Taniera set the bell agoing in the small belfry; and the faithful, who were not very numerous, gathered to prayers. I was once present: it was the Lord's day, and seven females and eight males composed

Digitized by Google

the congregation. A woman played precentor, starting with a longish note; the catechist joined in upon the second bar; and then the faithful in a body. Some had printed hymn-books which they followed; some of the rest filled up with "eh—eh—eh," the Paumotuan tol-de-rol. After the hymn, we had an antiphonal prayer or two; and then Taniera rose from the front bench, where he had been sitting in his catechist's robes, passed within the altar-rails, opened his Tahitian Bible, and began to preach from notes. I understood one word—the name of God; but the preacher managed his voice with taste, used rare and expressive gestures, and made a strong impression of sincerity. The plain service, the vernacular Bible, the hymn-tunes mostly on an English pattern—"God save the Queen," I was informed, a special favourite,—all, save some paper flowers upon the altar, seemed not merely but austerely Protestant. It is thus the Catholics have met their low island proselytes half way.

Taniera had the keys of our house; it was with him I made my bargain, if that could be called a bargain in which all was remitted to my generosity; it was he who fed the cats and poultry, he who came to call and pick a meal with us like an acknowledged friend; and we long fondly supposed he was our landlord. This belief was not to bear the test of experience; and, as my chapter has to relate, no certainty succeeded it.

We passed some days of airless quiet and great

Digitized by Google

heat; shell-gatherers were warned from the ocean beach, where sunstroke waited them from ten till four; the highest palm hung motionless, there was no voice audible but that of the sea on the far side. At last, about four of a certain afternoon, long cats-paws flawed the face of the lagoon; and presently in the tree-tops there awoke the grateful bustle of the trades, and all the houses and alleys of the island were fanned out. To more than one enchanted ship, that had lain long becalmed in view of the green shore, the wind brought deliverance; and by daylight on the morrow a schooner and two cutters lay moored in the port of Rotoava. Nor only in the outer sea, but in the lagoon itself, a certain traffic woke with the reviving breeze; and among the rest one François, a half-blood, set sail with the first light in his own half-decked cutter. He had held before a court appointment; being, I believe, the Residency sweeper-out. Trouble arising with the unpopular Vice-Resident, he had thrown his honours down, and fled to the far parts of the atoll to plant cabbages—or at least coco-palms. Thence he was now driven by such need as even a Cincinnatus must acknowledge, and fared for the capital city, the seat of his late functions, to exchange half a ton of copra for necessary flour. And here, for a while, the story leaves to tell of his voyaging.

It must tell, instead, of our house, where, toward seven at night, the catechist came sud-

Digitized by Google

denly in with his pleased air of being welcome; armed besides with a considerable bunch of keys. These he proceeded to try on the sea-chests, drawing each in turn from its place against the wall. Heads of strangers appeared in the doorway and volunteered suggestions. All in vain. Either they were the wrong keys or the wrong boxes, or the wrong man was trying them. For a little Taniera fumed and fretted; then had recourse to the more summary method of the hatchet; one of the chests was broken open, and an armful of clothing, male and female, baled out and handed to the strangers on the verandah.

These were François, his wife, and their child. About eight A. M., in the midst of the lagoon, their cutter had capsized in jibbing. They got her righted, and though she was still full of water put the child on board. The mainsail had been carried away, but the jib still drew her sluggishly along, and François and the woman swam astern and worked the rudder with their hands. The cold was cruel; the fatigue, as time went on, became excessive; and in that preserve of sharks, fear hunted them. Again and again, François, the half-breed, would have desisted and gone down; but the woman, whole blood of an amphibious race, still supported him with cheerful words. I am reminded of a woman of Hawaii who swam with her husband, I dare not say how many miles, in a high sea, and came ashore at last with his dead body in her arms.

Digitized by Google

It was about five in the evening, after nine hours' swimming, that François and his wife reached land at Rotoava. The gallant fight was won, and instantly the more childish side of native character appears. They had supped, and told and retold their story, dripping as they came; the flesh of the woman, whom Mrs. Stevenson helped to shift, was cold as stone; and François, having changed to a dry cotton shirt and trousers, passed the remainder of the evening on my floor and between open doorways, in a thorough draught. Yet François, the son of a French father, speaks excellent French himself and seems intelligent.

It was our first idea that the catechist, true to his evangelical vocation, was clothing the naked from his superfluity. Then it came out that François was but dealing with his own. The clothes were his, so was the chest, so was the house. François was in fact the landlord. Yet you observe he had hung back on the verandah while Taniera tried his 'prentice hand upon the locks; and even now, when his true character appeared, the only use he made of the estate was to leave the clothes of his family drying on the fence. Taniera was still the friend of the house, still fed the poultry, still came about us on his daily visits, François, during the remainder of his stay, holding bashfully aloof. And there was stranger matter. Since François had lost the whole load of his cutter, the half ton

Digitized by Google

of copra, an axe, bowls, knives, and clothes—since he had in a manner to begin the world again, and his necessary flour was not yet bought or paid for—I proposed to advance him what he needed on the rent. To my enduring amazement he refused, and the reason he gave—if that can be called a reason which but darkens counsel—was that Taniera was his friend. His friend, you observe; not his creditor. I inquired into that, and was assured that Taniera, an exile in a strange isle, might possibly be in debt himself, but certainly was no man's creditor.

Very early one morning we were awakened by a bustling presence in the yard, and found our camp had been surprised by a tall, lean, old native lady, dressed in what were obviously widow's weeds. You could see at a glance she was a notable woman, a housewife, sternly practical, alive with energy, and with fine possibilities of temper. Indeed there was nothing native about her but the skin; and the type abounds, and is everywhere respected, nearer home. It did us good to see her scour the grounds, examining the plants and chickens; watering, feeding, trimming them; taking angry, purpose-like possession. When she neared the house our sympathy abated; when she came to the broken chest I wished I were elsewhere. We had scarce a word in common; but her whole lean body spoke for her with indignant eloquence. "My chest!" it cried, with a stress on the possessive.

Digitized by Google

"My chest—broken open! This is a fine state of things!" I hastened to lay the blame where it belonged—on François and his wife—and found I had made things worse instead of better. She repeated the names at first with incredulity, then with despair. A while she seemed stunned, next fell to disembowelling the box, piling the goods on the floor, and visibly computing the extent of François's ravages; and presently after she was observed in high speech with Taniera, who seemed to hang an ear like one reproved.

Here, then, by all known marks, should be my landlady at last; here was every character of the proprietor fully developed. Should I not approach her on the still depending question of my rent? I carried the point to an adviser. "Nonsense!" he cried. "That's the old woman, the mother. It doesn't belong to her. I believe that's the man the house belongs to," and he pointed to one of the coloured photographs on the wall. On this I gave up all desire of understanding; and when the time came for me to leave, in the judgment-hall of the archipelago, and with the awful countenance of the acting Governor, I duly paid my rent to Taniera. He was satisfied, and so was I. But what had he to do with it? Mr. Donat, acting magistrate and a man of kindred blood, could throw no light upon the mystery; a plain private person, with a taste for letters, cannot be expected to do more.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

TRAITS AND SECTS IN THE PAUMOTUS

THE most careless reader must have remarked a change of air since the Marquesas. The house, crowded with effects, the bustling housewife counting her possessions, the serious, indoctrinated island pastor, the long fight for life in the lagoon: here are traits of a new world. I read in a pamphlet (I will not give the author's name) that the Marquesan especially resembles the Paumotuan. I should take the two races, though so near in neighbourhood, to be extremes of Polynesian diversity. The Marquesan is certainly the most beautiful of human races, and one of the tallest—the Paumotuan averaging a good inch shorter, and not even handsome; the Marquesan open-handed, inert, insensible to religion, childishly self-indulgent—the Paumotuan greedy, hardy, enterprising, a religious disputant, and with a trace of the ascetic character.

Yet a few years ago, and the people of the archipelago were crafty savages. Their isles might be called sirens' isles, not merely from the

Digitized by Google

attraction they exerted on the passing mariner, but from the perils that awaited him on shore. Even to this day, in certain outlying islands, danger lingers; and the civilised Paumotuan dreads to land and hesitates to accost his backward brother. But, except in these, to-day the peril is a memory. When our generation were yet in the cradle and playroom it was still a living fact. Between 1830 and 1840, Hao, for instance, was a place of the most dangerous approach, where ships were seized and crews kidnapped. As late as 1856, the schooner *Sarah Ann* sailed from Papeete and was seen no more. She had women on board, and children, the captain's wife, a nursemaid, a baby, and the two young sons of a Captain Steven on their way to the mainland for schooling. All were supposed to have perished in a squall. A year later, the captain of the *Julia*, coasting along the island variously called Bligh, Lagoon, and Tematangi, saw armed natives follow the course of his schooner, clad in many-coloured stuffs. Suspicion was at once aroused; the mother of the lost children was profuse of money; and one expedition having found the place deserted, and returned content with firing a few shots, she raised and herself accompanied another. None appeared to greet or to oppose them; they roamed a while among abandoned huts and empty thickets; then formed two parties and set forth to beat, from end to end, the pandanus jungle

Digitized by Google

of the island. One man remained alone by the landing-place—Teina, a chief of Anaa, leader of the armed natives who made the strength of the expedition. Now that his comrades were departed this way and that, on their laborious exploration, the silence fell profound; and this silence was the ruin of the islanders. A sound of stones rattling caught the ear of Teina. He looked, thinking to perceive a crab, and saw instead the brown hand of a human being issue from a fissure in the ground. A shout recalled the search parties and announced their doom to the buried caitiffs. In the cave below, sixteen were found crouching among human bones and singular and horrid curiosities. One was a head of golden hair, supposed to be a relic of the captain's wife; another was half of the body of a European child, sun-dried and stuck upon a stick, doubtless with some design of wizardry.

The Paumotuan is eager to be rich. He saves, grudges, buries money, fears not work. For a dollar each, two natives passed the hours of daylight cleaning our ship's copper. It was strange to see them so indefatigable and so much at ease in the water—working at times with their pipes lighted, the smoker at times submerged and only the glowing bowl above the surface; it was stranger still to think they were next congeners to the incapable Marquesan. But the Paumotuan not only saves, grudges, and works, he steals besides; or, to be more pre-

Digitized by Google

cise, he swindles. He will never deny a debt, he only flees his creditor. He is always keen for an advance; so soon as he has fingered it he disappears. He knows your ship; so soon as it nears one island, he is off to another. You may think you know his name; he has already changed it. Pursuit in that infinity of isles were fruitless. The result can be given in a nutshell. It has been actually proposed in a Government report to secure debts by taking a photograph of the debtor; and the other day in Papeete credits on the Paumotus to the amount of sixteen thousand pounds were sold for less than forty—*quatre cent mille francs pour moins de mille francs.* Even so, the purchase was thought hazardous; and only the man who made it and who had special opportunities could have dared to give so much.

The Paumotuan is sincerely attached to those of his own blood and household. A touching affection sometimes unites wife and husband. Their children, while they are alive, completely rule them; after they are dead, their bones or their mummies are often jealously preserved and carried from atoll to atoll in the wanderings of the family. I was told there were many houses in Fakarava with the mummy of a child locked in a sea-chest; after I heard it, I would glance a little jealously at those by my own bed; in that cupboard, also, it was possible there was a tiny skeleton.

Digitized by Google

The race seems in a fair way to survive. From fifteen islands, whose rolls I had occasion to consult, I found a proportion of 59 births to 47 deaths for 1887. Dropping three out of the fifteen, there remained for the other twelve the comfortable ratio of 50 births to 32 deaths. Long habits of hardship and activity doubtless explain the contrast with the Marquesan figures. But the Paumotuan displays, besides, a certain concern for health and the rudiments of a sanitary discipline. Public talk with these free-spoken people plays the part of the Contagious Diseases Act; incomers to fresh islands anxiously inquire if all be well; and syphilis, when contracted, is successfully treated with indigenous herbs. Like their neighbours of Tahiti, from whom they have perhaps imbibed the error, they regard leprosy with comparative indifference, elephantiasis with disproportionate fear. But, unlike indeed to the Tahitian, their alarm puts on the guise of self-defence. Any one stricken with this painful and ugly malady is confined to the ends of villages, denied the use of paths and highways, and condemned to transport himself between his house and coco-patch by water only, his very footprint being held infectious. Fe'efe'e, being a creature of marshes and the sequel of malarial fever, is not original in atolls. On the single isle of Makatea, where the lagoon is now a marsh, the disease has made a home. Many suffer; they are excluded (if

Digitized by Google

Mr. Wilmot be right) from much of the comfort of society; and it is believed they take a secret vengeance. The dejections of the sick are considered highly poisonous. Early in the morning, it is narrated, aged and malicious persons creep into the sleeping village, and stealthily make water at the doors of the houses of young men. Thus they propagate disease; thus they breathe on and obliterate comeliness and health, the objects of their envy. Whether horrid fact or more abominable legend, it equally depicts that something bitter and energetic which distinguishes Paumotuan man.

The archipelago is divided between two main religions, Catholic and Mormon. They front each other proudly with a false air of permanence; yet are but shapes, their membership in a perpetual flux. The Mormon attends mass with devotion; the Catholic sits attentive at a Mormon sermon, and to-morrow each may have transferred allegiance. One man had been a pillar of the Church of Rome for fifteen years; his wife dying, he decided that must be a poor religion that could not save a man his wife, and turned Mormon. According to one informant, Catholicism was the more fashionable in health, but on the approach of sickness it was judged prudent to secede. As a Mormon, there were five chances out of six you might recover; as a Catholic, your hopes were small; and this opinion is perhaps founded on the comfortable rite of unction.

Digitized by Google

We all know what Catholics are, whether in the Paumotus or at home. But the Paumotuan Mormon seemed a phenomenon apart. He marries but the one wife, uses the Protestant Bible, observes Protestant forms of worship, forbids the use of liquor and tobacco, practises adult baptism by immersion, and after every public sin, rechristens the backslider. I advised with Mahinui, whom I found well informed in the history of the American Mormons, and he declared against the least connection. "*Pour moi*," said he, with a fine charity, "*les Mormons ici un petit Catholiques.*" Some months later I had an opportunity to consult an orthodox fellow-countryman, an old dissenting Highlander, long settled in Tahiti, but still breathing of the heather of Tiree. "Why do they call themselves Mormons?" I asked. "My dear, and that is my question!" he exclaimed. "For by all that I can hear of their doctrine, I have nothing to say against it, and their life, it is above reproach." And for all that, Mormons they are, but of the earlier sowing: the so-called Josephites, the followers of Joseph Smith, the opponents of Brigham Young.

Grant, then, the Mormons to be Mormons. Fresh points at once arise: What are the Israelites? and what the Kanitus? For a long while back the sect had been divided into Mormons proper and so-called Israelites, I never could hear why. A few years since there came a visit-

Digitized by Google

ing missionary of the name of Williams, who made an excellent collection, and retired, leaving fresh disruption imminent. Something irregular (as I was told) in his way of "opening the service" had raised partisans and enemies; the church was once more rent asunder; and a new sect, the Kanitu, issued from the division. Since then Kanitus and Israelites, like the Cameronians and the United Presbyterians, have made common cause; and the ecclesiastical history of the Paumotus is, for the moment, uneventful. There will be more doing before long, and these isles bid fair to be the Scotland of the South. Two things I could never learn. The nature of the innovations of the Rev. Mr. Williams none would tell me, and of the meaning of the name Kanitu none had a guess. It was not Tahitian, it was not Marquesan; it formed no part of that ancient speech of the Paumotus, now passing swiftly into obsolescence. One man, a priest, God bless him! said it was the Latin for a little dog. I have found it since as the name of a god in New Guinea; it must be a bolder man than I who should hint at a connection. Here, then, is a singular thing: a brand-new sect, arising by popular acclamation, and a nonsense word invented for its name.

The design of mystery seems obvious, and according to a very intelligent observer, Mr. Magee of Mangareva, this element of the mysterious is a chief attraction of the Mormon

Digitized by Google

Church. It enjoys some of the status of Freemasonry at home, and there is for the convert some of the exhilaration of adventure. Other attractions are certainly conjoined. Perpetual rebaptism, leading to a succession of baptismal feasts, is found, both from the social and the spiritual side, a pleasing feature. More important is the fact that all the faithful enjoy office; perhaps more important still, the strictness of the discipline. "The veto on liquor," said Mr. Magee, "brings them plenty members." There is no doubt these islanders are fond of drink, and no doubt they refrain from the indulgence; a bout on a feast-day, for instance, may be followed by a week or a month of rigorous sobriety. Mr. Wilmot attributes this to Paumotuan frugality and the love of hoarding; it goes far deeper. I have mentioned that I made a feast on board the *Casco*. To wash down ship's bread and jam each guest was given the choice of rum or syrup, and out of the whole number only one man voted —in a defiant tone, and amid shouts of mirth— for "Trum"! This was in public. I had the meanness to repeat the experiment, whenever I had a chance, within the four walls of my house; and three at least, who had refused at the festival, greedily drank rum behind a door. But there were others thoroughly consistent. I said the virtues of the race were bourgeois and puritan; and how bourgeois is this! how puritanic! how Scottish! and how Yankee!—the tempta-

Digitized by Google

tion, the resistance, the public hypocritical conformity, the Pharisees, the Holy Willies, and the true disciples. With such a people the popularity of an ascetic Church appears legitimate; in these strict rules, in this perpetual supervision, the weak find their advantage, the strong a certain pleasure; and the doctrine of rebaptism, a clean bill and a fresh start, will comfort many staggering professors.

There is yet another sect, or what is called a sect—no doubt improperly—that of the Whistlers. Duncan Cameron, so clear in favour of the Mormons, was no less loud in condemnation of the Whistlers. Yet I do not know; I still fancy there is some connection, perhaps fortuitous, probably disavowed. Here at least are some doings in the house of an Israelite clergyman (or prophet) in the island of Anaa, of which I am equally sure that Duncan would disclaim and the Whistlers hail them for an imitation of their own. My informant, a Tahitian and a Catholic, occupied one part of the house; the prophet and his family lived in the other. Night after night the Mormons, in the one end, held their evening sacrifice of song; night after night, in the other, the wife of the Tahitian lay awake and listened to their singing with amazement. At length she could contain herself no longer, woke her husband, and asked him what he heard. "I hear several persons singing hymns," said he. "Yes," she returned, "but listen again!

Digitized by Google

Do you not hear something supernatural?" His attention thus directed, he was aware of a strange buzzing voice—and yet he declared it was beautiful—which justly accompanied the singers. The next day he made inquiries. "It is a spirit," said the prophet, with entire simplicity, "which has lately made a practice of joining us at family worship." It did not appear the thing was visible, and, like other spirits raised nearer home in these degenerate days, it was rudely ignorant, at first could only buzz, and had only learned of late to bear a part correctly in the music.

The performances of the Whistlers are more business-like. Their meetings are held publicly with open doors, all being "cordially invited to attend." The faithful sit about the room—according to one informant, singing hymns; according to another, now singing and now whistling; the leader, the wizard—let me rather say the medium—sits in the midst, enveloped in a sheet and silent; and presently, from just above his head, or sometimes from the midst of the roof, an aerial whistling proceeds, appalling to the inexperienced. This, it appears, is the language of the dead: its purport is taken down progressively by one of the expert, writing, I was told, "as fast as a telegraph operator"; and the communications are at last made public. They are of the baldest triviality; a schooner is perhaps announced, some idle gossip reported of a

Digitized by Google

neighbour, or if the spirit shall have been called to consultation on a case of sickness, a remedy may be suggested. One of these, immersion in scalding water, not long ago proved fatal to the patient. The whole business is very dreary, very silly, and very European: it has none of the picturesque qualities of similar conjurations in New Zealand; it seems to possess no kernel of possible sense, like some that I shall describe among the Gilbert islanders. Yet I was told that many hardy, intelligent natives were inveterate Whistlers. "Like Mahinui?" I asked, willing to have a standard; and I was told "Yes." Why should I wonder? Men more enlightened than my convict-catechist sit down at home to follies equally sterile and dull.

The medium is sometimes female. It was a woman, for instance, who introduced these practices on the north coast of Taiarapu, to the scandal of her own connections, her brother-in-law in particular declaring she was drunk. But what shocked Tahiti might seem fit enough in the Paumotus, the more so as certain women there possess, by the gift of nature, singular and useful powers. They say they are honest, well-intentioned ladies, some of them embarrassed by their weird inheritance. And indeed the trouble caused by this endowment is so great, and the protection afforded so infinitesimally small, that I hesitate whether to call it a gift or a hereditary curse. You may rob this lady's

Digitized by Google

coco-patch, steal her canoes, burn down her house, and slay her family scatheless; but one thing you must not do: you must not lay a hand upon her sleeping-mat, or your belly will swell, and you can only be cured by the lady or her husband. Here is the report of an eye-witness, Tasmanian born, educated, a man who has made money—certainly no fool. In 1886 he was present in a house on Makatea, where two lads began to skylark on the mats, and were (I think) ejected. Instantly after, their bellies began to swell; pains took hold on them; all manner of island remedies were exhibited in vain, and rubbing only magnified their sufferings. The man of the house was called, explained the nature of the visitation, and prepared the cure. A cocoa-nut was husked, filled with herbs, and with all the ceremonies of a launch, and the utterance of the spells in the Paumotuan language, committed to the sea. From that moment the pains began to grow more easy and the swelling to subside. The reader may stare. I can assure him, if he moved much among old residents of the archipelago, he would be driven to admit one thing of two—either that there is something in the swollen bellies or nothing in the evidence of man.

I have not met these gifted ladies; but I had an experience of my own, for I have played, for one night only, the part of the whistling spirit. It had been blowing wearily all day, but with the

Digitized by Google

fall of night the wind abated, and the moon, which was then full, rolled in a clear sky. We went southward down the island on the side of the lagoon, walking through long-drawn forest isles of palm, and on a floor of snowy sand. No life was abroad, nor sound of life; till in the clear part of the isle we spied the embers of a fire, and not far off, in a dark house, heard natives talking softly. To sit without a light, even in company, and under cover, is for a Paumotuan a somewhat hazardous extreme. The whole scene—the strong moonlight and crude shadows on the sand, the scattered coals, the sound of the low voices from the house, and the lap of the lagoon along the beach—put me (I know not how) on thoughts of superstition. I was barefoot, I observed my steps were noiseless, and drawing near to the dark house, but keeping well in the shadow, began to whistle. "The Heaving of the Lead" was my air—no very tragic piece. With the first note the conversation and all movement ceased; silence accompanied me while I continued; and when I passed that way on my return, I found the lamp was lighted in the house, but the tongues were still mute. All night, as I now think, the wretches shivered and were silent. For indeed, I had no guess at the time at the nature and magnitude of the terrors I inflicted, or with what grisly images the notes of that old song had peopled the dark house.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

A PAUMOTUAN FUNERAL

NO, I had no guess of these men's terrors. Yet I had received ere that a hint, if I had understood; and the occasion was a funeral.

A little apart in the main avenue of Rotoava, in a low hut of leaves that opened on a small enclosure, like a pigsty on a pen, an old man dwelt solitary with his aged wife. Perhaps they were too old to migrate with the others; perhaps they were too poor, and had no possessions to dispute. At least they had remained behind; and it thus befell that they were invited to my feast. I daresay it was quite a piece of politics in the pigsty whether to come or not to come, and the husband long swithered between curiosity and age, till curiosity conquered, and they came, and in the midst of that last merry-making death tapped him on the shoulder. For some days, when the sky was bright and the wind cool, his mat would be spread in the main highway of the village, and he was to be seen lying there inert, a mere handful of man, his wife inertly seated by his head. They seemed to have outgrown

Digitized by Google

alike our needs and faculties; they neither spoke nor listened; they suffered us to pass without a glance; the wife did not fan, she seemed not to attend upon her husband, and the two poor antiques sat juxtaposed under the high canopy of palms, the human tragedy reduced to its bare elements, a sight beyond pathos, stirring a thrill of curiosity. And yet there was one touch of the pathetic haunted me: that so much youth and expectation should have run in these starved veins, and the man should have squandered all his lees of life on a pleasure party.

On the morning of 17th September the sufferer died, and, time pressing, he was buried the same day at four. The cemetery lies to seaward behind Government House; broken coral, like so much road-metal, forms the surface; a few wooden crosses, a few inconsiderable upright stones, designate graves; a mortared wall, high enough to lean on, rings it about; a clustering shrub surrounds it with pale leaves. Here was the grave dug that morning, doubtless by uneasy diggers, to the sound of the nigh sea and the cries of seabirds; meanwhile the dead man waited in his house, and the widow and another aged woman leaned on the fence before the door, no speech upon their lips, no speculation in their eyes.

Sharp at the hour the procession was in march, the coffin wrapped in white and carried by four bearers; mourners behind—not many, for not many remained in Rotoava, and not many in

Digitized by Google

black, for these were poor; the men in straw hats, white coats, and blue trousers or the gorgeous parti-coloured pariu, the Tahitian kilt; the women, with a few exceptions, brightly habited. Far in the rear came the widow, painfully carrying the dead man's mat; a creature aged beyond humanity, to the likeness of some missing link.

The dead man had been a Mormon; but the Mormon clergyman was gone with the rest to wrangle over boundaries in the adjacent isle, and a layman took his office. Standing at the head of the open grave, in a white coat and blue pariu, his Tahitian Bible in his hand and one eye bound with a red handkerchief, he read solemnly that chapter in Job which has been read and heard over the bones of so many of our fathers, and with a good voice offered up two prayers. The wind and the surf bore a burthen. By the cemetery gate a mother in crimson suckled an infant rolled in blue. In the midst the widow sat upon the ground and polished one of the coffin-stretchers with a piece of coral; a little later she had turned her back to the grave and was playing with a leaf. Did she understand? God knows. The officiant paused a moment, stooped, and gathered and threw reverently on the coffin a handful of rattling coral. Dust to dust: but the grains of this dust were gross like cherries, and the true dust that was to follow sat near by, still cohering (as by

Digitized by Google

miracle) in the tragic semblance of a female ape.

So far, Mormon or not, it was a Christian funeral. The well-known passage had been read from Job, the prayers had been rehearsed, the grave was filled, the mourners straggled homeward. With a little coarser grain of covering earth, a little nearer outcry of the sea, a stronger glare of sunlight on the rude enclosure, and some incongruous colours of attire, the well-remembered form had been observed.

By rights it should have been otherwise. The mat should have been buried with its owner; but, the family being poor, it was thriftily reserved for a fresh service. The widow should have flung herself upon the grave and raised the voice of official grief, the neighbours have chimed in, and the narrow isle rung for a space with lamentation. But the widow was old; perhaps she had forgotten, perhaps never understood, and she played like a child with leaves and coffin-stretchers. In all ways my guest was buried with maimed rights. Strange to think that his last conscious pleasure was the *Casco* and my feast; strange to think that he had limped there, an old child, looking for some new good. And the good thing, rest, had been allotted him.

But though the widow had neglected much, there was one part she must not utterly neglect. She came away with the dispersing funeral; but the dead man's mat was left behind upon the

Digitized by Google

grave, and I learned that by set of sun she must return to sleep there. This vigil is imperative. From sundown till the rising of the morning star the Paumotuan must hold his watch above the ashes of his kindred. Many friends, if the dead have been a man of mark, will keep the watchers company; they will be well supplied with coverings against the weather; I believe they bring food, and the rite is persevered in for two weeks. Our poor survivor, if, indeed, she properly survived, had little to cover, and few to sit with her; on the night of the funeral a strong squall chased her from her place of watch; for days the weather held uncertain and outrageous; and ere seven nights were up she had desisted, and returned to sleep in her low roof. That she should be at the pains of returning for so short a visit to a solitary house, that this borderer of the grave should fear a little wind and a wet blanket, filled me at the time with musings. I could not say she was indifferent; she was so far beyond me in experience that the court of my criticism waived jurisdiction; but I forged excuses, telling myself she had perhaps little to lament, perhaps suffered much, perhaps understood nothing. And lo! in the whole affair there was no question whether of tenderness or piety, and the sturdy return of this old remnant was a mark either of uncommon sense or of uncommon fortitude.

Yet one thing had occurred that partly set me on the trail. I have said the funeral passed

Digitized by Google

much as at home. But when all was over, when we were trooping in decent silence from the graveyard gate and down the path to the settlement, a sudden inbreak of a different spirit startled and perhaps dismayed us. Two people walked not far apart in our procession: my friend Mr. Donat—Donat-Rimarau. "Donat the much handed"—acting Vice-Resident, present ruler of the archipelago, by far the man of chief importance on the scene, but known besides for one of an unshakable good temper; and a certain comely, strapping young Paumotuan woman, the comeliest on the isle, not (let us hope) the bravest or the most polite. Of a sudden, ere yet the grave silence of the funeral was broken, she made a leap at the Resident, with pointed finger, shrieked a few words, and fell back again with a laughter, not a natural mirth. "What did she say to you?" I asked. "She did not speak to *me*," said Donat, a shade perturbed; "she spoke to the ghost of the dead man." And the purport of her speech was this: "See there! Donat will be a fine feast for you to-night."

"M. Donat called it a jest," I wrote at the time in my diary. "It seemed to me more in the nature of a terrified conjuration, as though she would divert the ghost's attention from herself. A cannibal race may well have cannibal phantoms." The guesses of the traveller appear foredoomed to be erroneous; yet in these I

Digitized by Google

was precisely right. The woman had stood by in terror at the funeral, being then in a dread spot, the graveyard. She looked on in terror to the coming night, with that ogre, a new spirit, loosed upon the isle. And the words she had cried in Donat's face were indeed a terrified conjuration, basely to shield herself, basely to dedicate another in her stead. One thing is to be said in her excuse. Doubtless she partly chose Donat because he was a man of great good-nature, but partly, too, because he was a man of the half-caste. For I believe all natives regard white blood as a kind of talisman against the powers of hell. In no other way can they explain the unpunished recklessness of Europeans.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

GRAVEYARD STORIES

WITH my superstitious friend, the islander, I fear I am not wholly frank, often leading the way with stories of my own, and being always a grave and sometimes an excited hearer. But the deceit is scarce mortal, since I am as pleased to hear as he to tell, as pleased with the story as he with the belief; and besides, it is entirely needful. For it is scarce possible to exaggerate the extent and empire of his superstitions; they mould his life, they colour his thinking; and when he does not speak to me of ghosts, and gods, and devils, he is playing the dissembler and talking only with his lips. With thoughts so different, one must indulge the other; and I would rather that I should indulge his superstition than he my incredulity. Of one thing, besides, I may be sure: Let me indulge it as I please, I shall not hear the whole; for he is already on his guard with me, and the amount of the lore is boundless.

I will give but a few instances at random, chiefly from my own doorstep in Upolu, during

Digitized by Google

the past month (October, 1890). One of my workmen was sent the other day to the banana patch, there to dig; this is a hollow of the mountain, buried in woods, out of all sight and cry of mankind; and long before dusk Lafaele was back again beside the cook-house with embarrassed looks; he dared not longer stay alone, he was afraid of "spilits in the bush." It seems these are the souls of the unburied dead, haunting where they fell, and wearing woodland shapes of pig, or bird, or insect; the bush is full of them, they seem to eat nothing, slay solitary wanderers apparently in spite, and at times, in human form, go down to villages and consort with the inhabitants undetected. So much I learned a day or so after, walking in the bush with a very intelligent youth, a native. It was a little before noon; a grey day and squally; and perhaps I had spoken lightly. A dark squall burst on the side of the mountain; the woods shook and cried; the dead leaves rose from the ground in clouds, like butterflies; and my companion came suddenly to a full stop. He was afraid, he said, of the trees falling; but as soon as I had changed the subject of our talk he proceeded with alacrity. A day or two before a messenger came up the mountain from Apia with a letter; I was in the bush, he must await my return, then wait till I had answered: and before I was done his voice sounded shrill with terror of the coming night and the long forest road. These are the

Digitized by Google

commons. Take the chiefs. There has been a great coming and going of signs and omens in our group. One river ran down blood; red eels were captured in another; an unknown fish was thrown upon the coast, an ominous word found written on its scales. So far we might be reading in a monkish chronicle; now we come on a fresh note, at once modern and Polynesian. The gods of Upolu and Savaii, our two chief islands, contended recently at cricket. Since then they are at war. Sounds of battle are heard to roll along the coast. A woman saw a man swim from the high seas and plunge direct into the bush; he was no man of that neighbourhood; and it was known he was one of the gods, speeding to a council. Most perspicuous of all, a missionary on Savaii, who is also a medical man, was disturbed late in the night by knocking; it was no hour for the dispensary, but at length he woke his servant and sent him to inquire; the servant, looking from a window, beheld crowds of persons, all with grievous wounds, lopped limbs, broken heads, and bleeding bullet-holes; but when the door was opened all had disappeared. They were gods from the field of battle. Now these reports have certainly significance; it is not hard to trace them to political grumblers or to read in them a threat of coming trouble; from that merely human side I found them ominous myself. But it was the spiritual side of their significance that was discussed in

Digitized by Google

secret council by my rulers. I shall best depict this mingled habit of the Polynesian mind by two connected instances. I once lived in a village, the name of which I do not mean to tell. The chief and his sister were persons perfectly intelligent: gentlefolk, apt of speech. The sister was very religious, a great church-goer, one that used to reprove me if I stayed away; I found afterward that she privately worshipped a shark. The chief himself was somewhat of a freethinker; at the least, a latitudinarian: he was a man, besides, filled with European knowledge and accomplishments; of an impassive, ironical habit; and I should as soon have expected superstition in Mr. Herbert Spencer. Hear the sequel. I had discovered by unmistakable signs that they buried too shallow in the village graveyard, and I took my friend, as the responsible authority, to task. "There is something wrong about your graveyard," said I, "which you must attend to, or it may have very bad results." "Something wrong? What is it?" he asked, with an emotion that surprised me. "If you care to go along there any evening about nine o'clock you can see for yourself," said I. He stepped backward. "A ghost!" he cried.

In short, in the whole field of the South Seas there is not one to blame another. Half blood and whole, pious and debauched, intelligent and dull, all men believe in ghosts, all men combine with their recent Christianity fear of and a linger-

Digitized by Google

ing faith in the old island deities. So, in Europe, the gods of Olympus slowly dwindled into village bogies; so to-day, the theological Highlander sneaks from under the eye of the Free Church divine to lay an offering by a sacred well.

I try to deal with the whole matter here because of a particular quality in Paumotuan superstitions. It is true I heard them told by a man with a genius for such narrations. Close about our evening lamp, within sound of the island surf, we hung on his words, thrilling. The reader, in far other scenes, must listen close for the faint echo.

This bundle of weird stories sprang from the burial and the woman's selfish conjuration. I was dissatisfied with what I heard, harped upon questions, and struck at last this vein of metal. It is from sundown to about four in the morning that the kinsfolk camp upon the grave; and these are the hours of the spirits' wanderings. At any time of the night—it may be earlier, it may be later—a sound is to be heard below, which is the noise of his liberation; at four sharp, another and a louder marks the instant of the re-imprisonment; between-whiles, he goes his malignant rounds. "Did you ever see an evil spirit?" was once asked of a Paumotuan. "Once." "Under what form?" "It was in the form of a crane." "And how did you know that crane to be a spirit?" was asked. "I will tell you," he answered; and this was the purport of

Digitized by Google

his inconclusive narrative. His father had been dead nearly a fortnight; others had wearied of the watch; and as the sun was setting, he found himself by the grave alone. It was not yet dark, rather the hour of the afterglow, when he was aware of a snow-white crane upon the coral mound; presently more cranes came, some white, some black; then the cranes vanished, and he saw in their place a white cat, to which there was silently joined a great company of cats of every hue conceivable; then these also disappeared, and he was left astonished.

This was an anodyne appearance. Take instead the experience of Rua-a-mariterangi on the isle of Katiu. He had a need for some pandanus, and crossed the isle to the sea-beach, where it chiefly flourishes. The day was still, and Rua was surprised to hear a crashing sound among the thickets, and then the fall of a considerable tree. Here must be some one building a canoe; and he entered the margin of the wood to find and pass the time of day with this chance neighbour. The crashing sounded more at hand; and then he was aware of something drawing swiftly near among the tree-tops. It swung by its heels downward, like an ape, so that its hands were free for murder; it depended safely by the slightest twigs; the speed of its coming was incredible; and soon Rua recognised it for a corpse, horrible with age, its bowels hanging as it came. Prayer was the weapon of Christian in the Valley of

Digitized by Google

the Shadow, and it is to prayer that Rua-a-mariterangi attributes his escape. No merely human expedition had availed.

This demon was plainly from the grave; yet you will observe he was abroad by day. And inconsistent as it may seem with the hours of the night watch and the many references to the rising of the morning star, it is no singular exception. I could never find a case of another who had seen this ghost, diurnal and arboreal in its habits; but others have heard the fall of the tree, which seems the signal of its coming. Mr. Donat was once pearling on the uninhabited isle of Haraiki. It was a day without a breath of wind, such as alternate in the archipelago with days of contumelious breezes. The divers were in the midst of the lagoon upon their employment; the cook, a boy of ten, was over his pots in the camp. Thus were all souls accounted for except a single native who accompanied Donat into the woods in quest of sea-fowls' eggs. In a moment, out of the stillness, came the sound of the fall of a great tree. Donat would have passed on to find the cause. "No," cried his companion, "that was no tree. It was something *not right*. Let us go back to camp." Next Sunday the divers were turned on, all that part of the isle was thoroughly examined, and sure enough no tree had fallen. A little later Mr. Donat saw one of his divers flee from a similar sound, in similar unaffected panic, on the

Digitized by Google

same isle. But neither would explain, and it was not till afterwards, when he met with Rua, that he learned the occasion of their terrors.

But whether by day or night, the purpose of the dead in these abhorred activities is still the same. In Samoa, my informant had no idea of the food of the bush spirits; no such ambiguity would exist in the mind of a Paumotuan. In that hungry archipelago, living and dead must alike toil for nutriment; and the race having been cannibal in the past, the spirits are so still. When the living ate the dead, horrified nocturnal imagination drew the shocking inference that the dead might eat the living. Doubtless they slay men, doubtless even mutilate them, in mere malice. Marquesan spirits sometimes tear out the eyes of travellers; but even that may be more practical than appears, for the eye is a cannibal dainty. And certainly the root-idea of the dead, at least in the far eastern islands, is to prowl for food. It was as a dainty morsel for a meal that the woman denounced Donat at the funeral. There are spirits besides who prey in particular not on the bodies but on the souls of the dead. The point is clearly made in a Tahitian story. A child fell sick, grew swiftly worse, and at last showed signs of death. The mother hastened to the house of a sorcerer, who lived hard by. "You are yet in time," said he; "a spirit has just run past my door carrying the soul of your child wrapped in the leaf of a purao; but I have

Digitized by Google

a spirit stronger and swifter who will run him down ere he has time to eat it." Wrapped in a leaf: like other things edible and corruptible.

Or take an experience of Mr. Donat's on the island of Anaa. It was a night of a high wind, with violent squalls; his child was very sick, and the father, though he had gone to bed, lay wakeful, hearkening to the gale. All at once a fowl was violently dashed on the house wall. Supposing he had forgot to put it in shelter with the rest, Donat arose, found the bird (a cock) lying on the verandah, and put it in the hen-house, the door of which he securely fastened. Fifteen minutes later the business was repeated. only this time, as it was being dashed against the wall, the bird crew. Again Donat replaced it, examining the hen-house thoroughly and finding it quite perfect; as he was so engaged the wind puffed out his light, and he must grope back to the door a good deal shaken. Yet a third time the bird was dashed upon the wall; a third time Donat set it, now near dead, beside its mates; and he was scarce returned before there came a rush, like that of a furious strong man, against the door, and a whistle as loud as that of a railway engine rang about the house. The sceptical reader may here detect the finger of the tempest; but the women gave up all for lost and clustered on the beds lamenting. Nothing followed, and I must suppose the gale somewhat abated, for presently after a chief came

Digitized by Google

visiting. He was a bold man to be abroad so late, but doubtless carried a bright lantern. And he was certainly a man of counsel, for as soon as he heard the details of these disturbances he was in a position to explain their nature. "Your child," said he, "must certainly die. This is the evil spirit of our island who lies in wait to eat the spirits of the newly dead." And then he went on to expatiate on the strangeness of the spirit's conduct. He was not usually, he explained, so open of assault, but sat silent on the house-top waiting in the guise of a bird, while within the people tended the dying and bewailed the dead, and had no thought of peril. But when the day came and the doors were opened and men began to go abroad, blood-stains on the wall betrayed the tragedy.

This is the quality I admire in Paumotuan legend. In Tahiti the spirit-eater is said to assume a vesture which has much more of pomp, but how much less of horror. It has been seen by all sorts and conditions, native and foreign, only the last insist it is a meteor. My authority was not so sure. He was riding with his wife about two in the morning; both were near asleep, and the horses not much better. It was a brilliant and still night, and the road wound over a mountain, near by a deserted marae (old Tahitian temple). All at once the appearance passed above them: a form of light; the head round and greenish; the body long, red, and with a focus

Digitized by Google

of yet redder brilliancy about the midst. A buzzing hoot accompanied its passage; it flew direct out of one marae, and direct for another down the mountain-side. And this, as my informant argued, is suggestive. For why should a mere meteor frequent the altars of abominable gods? The horses, I should say, were equally dismayed with their riders. Now I am not dismayed at all—not even agreeably. Give me rather the bird upon the house-top and the morning blood-gouts on the wall.

But the dead are not exclusive in their diet. They carry with them to the grave, in particular, the Polynesian taste for fish, and enter at times with the living into a partnership in fishery. Rua-a-mariterangi is again my authority; I feel it diminishes the credit of the fact, but how it builds up the image of this inveterate ghost-seer! He belongs to the miserably poor island of Taenga, yet his father's house was always well supplied. As Rua grew up he was called at last to go a-fishing with this fortunate parent. They rowed into the lagoon at dusk, to an unlikely place, and the boy lay down in the stern, and the father began vainly to cast his line over the bows. It is to be supposed that Rua slept; and when he awoke there was the figure of another beside his father, and his father was pulling in the fish hand over hand. "Who is that man, father?" Rua asked. "It is none of your business," said the father; and Rua supposed the

Digitized by Google

stranger had swum off to them from shore. Night after night they fared into the lagoon, often to the most unlikely places; night after night the stranger would suddenly be seen on board, and as suddenly be missed; and morning after morning the canoe returned laden with fish. "My father is a very lucky man," thought Rua. At last, one fine day, there came first one boat party and then another, who must be entertained; father and son put off later than usual into the lagoon; and before the canoe was landed it was four o'clock, and the morning star was close on the horizon. Then the stranger appeared seized with some distress; turned about showing for the first time his face, which was that of one long dead, with shining eyes; stared into the east, set the tips of his fingers to his mouth like one a-cold, uttered a strange, shuddering sound between a whistle and a moan —a thing to freeze the blood; and, the day-star just rising from the sea, he suddenly was not. Then Rua understood why his father prospered, why his fishes rotted early in the day, and why some were always carried to the cemetery and laid upon the graves. My informant is a man not certainly averse to superstition, but he keeps his head, and takes a certain superior interest, which I may be allowed to call scientific. The last point reminding him of some parallel practice in Tahiti, he asked Rua if the fish were left, or carried home again after a formal dedication.

Digitized by Google

It appears old Mariterangi practised both methods; sometimes treating his shadowy partner to a mere oblation, sometimes honestly leaving his fish to rot upon the grave.

It is plain we have in Europe stories of a similar complexion; and the Polynesian *varua ino* or *aitu o le vao* is clearly the near kinsman of the Transylvanian vampire. Here is a tale in which the kinship appears broadly marked. On the atoll of Penrhyn, then still partly savage, a certain chief was long the salutary terror of the natives. He died, he was buried; and his late neighbours had scarce tasted the delights of licence ere his ghost appeared about the village. Fear seized upon all; a council was held of the chief men and sorcerers; and with the approval of the Rarotongan missionary, who was as frightened as the rest, and in the presence of several whites—my friend Mr. Ben Hird being one—the grave was opened, deepened until water came, and the body re-interred face down. The still recent staking of suicides in England and the decapitation of vampires in the east of Europe form close parallels.

So in Samoa only the spirits of the unburied awake fear. During the late war many fell in the bush; their bodies, sometimes headless, were brought back by native pastors and interred; but this (I know not why) was insufficient, and the spirit still lingered on the theatre of death. When peace returned a singular scene was en-

Digitized by Google

acted in many places, and chiefly round the high gorges of Lotoanuu, where the struggle was long centred and the loss had been severe. Kinswomen of the dead came carrying a mat or sheet and guided by survivors of the fight. The place of death was earnestly sought out; the sheet was spread upon the ground; and the women, moved with pious anxiety, sat about and watched it. If any living thing alighted it was twice brushed away; upon the third coming it was known to be the spirit of the dead, was folded in, carried home and buried beside the body; and the aitu rested. The rite was practised beyond doubt in simple piety; the repose of the soul was its object: its motive, reverent affection. The present king disowns indeed all knowledge of a dangerous aitu; he declares the souls of the unburied were only wanderers in limbo, lacking an entrance to the proper country of the dead, unhappy, nowise hurtful. And this severely classic opinion doubtless represents the views of the enlightened. But the flight of my Lafaele marks the grosser terrors of the ignorant.

This belief in the exorcising efficacy of funeral rites perhaps explains a fact, otherwise amazing, that no Polynesian seems at all to share our European horror of human bones and mummies. Of the first they made their cherished ornaments; they preserved them in houses or in mortuary caves; and the watchers of royal sepulchres dwelt with their children among the bones of

Digitized by Google

generations. The mummy, even in the making, was as little feared. In the Marquesas, on the extreme east, it was made by the household with continual unction and exposure to the sun; in the Carolines, upon the farthest west, it is still cured in the smoke of the family hearth. Head-hunting, besides, still lives around my doorstep in Samoa. And not ten years ago, in the Gilberts, the widow must disinter, cleanse, polish, and thenceforth carry about her, by day and night, the head of her dead husband. In all these cases we may suppose the process, whether of cleansing or drying, to have fully exorcised the aitu.

But the Paumotuan belief is more obscure. Here the man is duly buried, and he has to be watched. He is duly watched, and the spirit goes abroad in spite of watches. Indeed, it is not the purpose of the vigils to prevent these wanderings; only to mollify by polite attention the inveterate malignity of the dead. Neglect (it is supposed) may irritate and thus invite his visits, and the aged and weakly sometimes balance risks and stay at home. Observe, it is the dead man's kindred and next friends who thus deprecate his fury with nocturnal watchings. Even the placatory vigil is held perilous, except in company, and a boy was pointed out to me in Rotoava, because he had watched alone by his own father. Not the ties of the dead, nor yet their proved character, affect the issue. A

Digitized by Google

late Resident, who died in Fakarava of sunstroke, was beloved in life, and is still remembered with affection; none the less his spirit went about the island clothed with terrors, and the neighbourhood of Government House was still avoided after dark. We may sum up the cheerful doctrine thus: All men become vampires, and the vampire spares none. And here we come face to face with a tempting inconsistency. For the whistling spirits are notoriously clannish; I understood them to wait upon and to enlighten kinsfolk only, and that the medium was always of the race of the communicating spirit. Here, then, we have the bonds of the family, on the one hand, severed at the hour of death; on the other, helpfully persisting.

The child's soul in the Tahitian tale was wrapped in leaves. It is the spirits of the newly dead that are the dainty. When they are slain, the house is stained with blood. Rua's dead fisherman was decomposed; so—and horribly—was his arboreal demon. The spirit, then, is a thing material; and it is by the material ensigns of corruption that he is distinguished from the living man. This opinion is widespread, adds a gross terror to the more ugly Polynesian tales, and sometimes defaces the more engaging with a painful and incongruous touch. I will give two examples sufficiently wide apart, one from Tahiti, one from Samoa.

And first from Tahiti. A man went to visit

Digitized by Google

the husband of his sister, then some time dead. In her life the sister had been dainty in the island fashion, and went always adorned with a coronet of flowers. In the midst of the night the brother awoke and was aware of a heavenly fragrance going to and fro in the dark house. The lamp I must suppose to have burned out; no Tahitian would have lain down without one lighted. Awhile he lay wondering and delighted; then called upon the rest. "Do none of you smell flowers?" he asked. "O," said his brother-in-law, "we are used to that here." The next morning these two men went walking, and the widower confessed that his dead wife came about the house continually, and that he had even seen her. She was shaped and dressed and crowned with flowers as in her lifetime; only she moved a few inches above the earth with a very easy progress, and flitted dry-shod above the surface of the river. And now comes my point: It was always in a back view that she appeared; and these brothers-in-law, debating the affair, agreed that this was to conceal the inroads of corruption.

Now for the Samoan story. I owe it to the kindness of Dr. F. Otto Sierich, whose collection of folk-tales I expect with a high degree of interest. A man in Manu'a was married to two wives and had no issue. He went to Savaii, married there a third, and was more fortunate. When his wife was near her time he remembered he was in a strange island, like a poor man; and

Digitized by Google

when his child was born he must be shamed for lack of gifts. It was in vain his wife dissuaded him. He returned to his father in Manu'a seeking help; and with what he could get he set off in the night to re-embark. Now his wives heard of his coming; they were incensed he did not stay to visit them; and on the beach, by his canoe, intercepted and slew him. Now the third wife lay asleep in Savaii; her babe was born and slept by her side; and she was awakened by the spirit of her husband. "Get up," he said, "my father is sick in Manu'a and we must go to visit him." "It is well," said she; "take you the child, while I carry its mats." "I cannot carry the child," said the spirit; "I am too cold from the sea." When they were got on board the canoe the wife smelt carrion. "How is this?" she said. "What have you in the canoe that I should smell carrion?" "It is nothing in the canoe," said the spirit. "It is the land-wind blowing down the mountains, where some beast lies dead." It appears it was still night when they reached Manu'a—the swiftest passage on record—and as they entered the reef the bale-fires burned in the village. Again she asked him to carry the child; but now he need no more dissemble. "I cannot carry your child," said he, "for I am dead, and the fires you see are burning for my funeral."

The curious may learn in Dr. Sierich's book the unexpected sequel of the tale. Here is

Digitized by Google

enough for my purpose. Though the man was but new dead, the ghost was already putrefied, as though putrefaction were the mark and of the essence of a spirit. The vigil on the Paumotuan grave does not extend beyond two weeks, and they told me this period was thought to coincide with that of the resolution of the body. The ghost always marked with decay—the danger seemingly ending with the process of dissolution —here is tempting matter for the theorist. But it will not do. The lady of the flowers had been long dead, and her spirit was still supposed to bear the brand of perishability. The Resident had been more than a fortnight buried, and his vampire was still supposed to go the rounds.

Of the lost state of the dead, from the lurid Mangaian legend, in which infernal deities hocus and destroy the souls of all, to the various submarine and aerial limbos where the dead feast, float, idle, or resume the occupations of their life on earth, it would be wearisome to tell. One story I give, for it is singular in itself, is well known in Tahiti, and has this of interest, that it is post-Christian, dating indeed from but a few years back. A princess of the reigning house died; was transported to the neighbouring isle of Raiatea; fell there under the empire of a spirit who condemned her to climb coco-palms all day and bring him the nuts; was found after some time in this miserable servitude by a second spirit, one of her own house; and by him, upon

Digitized by Google

her lamentations, reconveyed to Tahiti, where she found her body still waked, but already swollen with the approaches of corruption. It is a lively point in the tale that, on the sight of this dishonoured tabernacle, the princess prayed she might continue to be numbered with the dead. But it seems it was too late, her spirit was replaced by the least dignified of entrances, and her startled family beheld the body move. The seemingly purgatorial labours, the helpful kindred spirit, and the horror of the princess at the sight of her tainted body, are all points to be remarked.

The truth is, the tales are not necessarily consistent in themselves; and they are further darkened for the stranger by an ambiguity of language. Ghosts, vampires, spirits, and gods are all confounded. And yet I seem to perceive that (with exceptions) those whom we would count gods were less maleficent. Permanent spirits haunt and do murder in corners of Samoa; but those legitimate gods of Upolu and Savaii, whose wars and cricketings of late convulsed society, I did not gather to be dreaded, or not with a like fear. The spirit of Anaa that ate souls is certainly a fearsome inmate; but the high gods, even of the archipelago, seem helpful. Mahinui—from whom our convict-catechist had been named—the spirit of the sea, like a Proteus endowed with endless avatars, came to the assistance of the shipwrecked and carried them

Digitized by Google

ashore in the guise of a ray-fish. The same divinity bore priests from isle to isle about the archipelago, and by his aid, within the century, persons have been seen to fly. The tutelar deity of each isle is likewise helpful, and by a particular form of wedge-shaped cloud on the horizon announces the coming of a ship.

To one who conceives of these atolls, so narrow, so barren, so beset with sea, here would seem a superfluity of ghostly denizens. And yet there are more. In the various brackish pools and ponds, beautiful women with long red hair are seen to rise and bathe; only (timid as mice) on the first sound of feet upon the coral they dive again for ever. They are known to be healthy and harmless living people, dwellers of an underworld; and the same fancy is current in Tahiti, where also they have the hair red. *Tetea* is the Tahitian name; the Paumotuan, *Mokurea*.

Digitized by Google

PART III
THE GILBERTS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

BUTARITARI

AT Honolulu we had said farewell to the *Casco* and to Captain Otis, and our next adventure was made in changed conditions. Passage was taken for myself, my wife, Mr. Osbourne, and my China boy, Ah Fu, on a pigmy trading schooner, the *Equator*, Captain Dennis Reid; and on a certain bright June day in 1889, adorned in the Hawaiian fashion with the garlands of departure, we drew out of port and bore with a fair wind for Micronesia.

The whole extent of the South Seas is desert of ships; more especially that part where we were now to sail. No post runs in these islands; communication is by accident; where you may have designed to go is one thing, where you shall be able to arrive another. It was my hope, for instance, to have reached the Carolines, and returned to the light of day by way of Manila and the China ports; and it was in Samoa that we were destined to re-appear and be once more refreshed with the sight of mountains. Since the sunset faded from the peaks of Oahu six

Digitized by Google

months had intervened, and we had seen no spot of earth so high as an ordinary cottage. Our path had been still on the flat sea, our dwellings upon unerected coral, our diet from the pickle-tub or out of tins; I had learned to welcome shark's flesh for a variety; and a mountain, an onion, an Irish potato or a beef-steak, had been long lost to sense and dear to aspiration.

The two chief places of our stay, Butaritari and Apemama, lie near the line; the latter within thirty miles. Both enjoy a superb ocean climate, days of blinding sun and bracing wind, nights of a heavenly brightness. Both are somewhat wider than Fakarava, measuring perhaps (at the widest) a quarter of a mile from beach to beach. In both, a coarse kind of *taro* thrives; its culture is a chief business of the natives, and the consequent mounds and ditches make miniature scenery and amuse the eye. In all else they show the customary features of an atoll; the low horizon, the expanse of the lagoon, the sedge-like rim of palm-tops, the sameness and smallness of the land, the hugely superior size and interest of sea and sky. Life on such islands is in many points like life on shipboard. The atoll, like the ship, is soon taken for granted; and the islanders, like the ship's crew, become soon the centre of attention. The isles are populous, independent, seats of kinglets, recently civilised, little visited. In the last decade many changes have crept in; women no longer go unclothed till marriage; the

Digitized by Google

widow no longer sleeps at night and goes abroad by day with the skull of her dead husband; and, fire-arms being introduced, the spear and the shark-tooth sword are sold for curiosities. Ten years ago all these things and practices were to be seen in use; yet ten years more, and the old society will have entirely vanished. We came in a happy moment to see its institutions still erect and (in Apemama) scarce decayed.

Populous and independent—warrens of men, ruled over with some rustic pomp—such was the first and still the recurring impression of these tiny lands. As we stood across the lagoon for the town of Butaritari, a stretch of the low shore was seen to be crowded with the brown roofs of houses; those of the palace and king's summer parlour (which are of corrugated iron) glittered near one end conspicuously bright; the royal colours flew hard by on a tall flagstaff; in front, on an artificial islet, the gaol played the part of a martello. Even upon this first and distant view, the place had scarce the air of what it truly was, a village; rather of that which it was also, a petty metropolis, a city rustic and yet royal.

The lagoon is shoal. The tide being out, we waded for some quarter of a mile in tepid shallows, and stepped ashore at last into a flagrant stagnancy of sun and heat. The lee side of a line island after noon is indeed a breathless place; on the ocean beach the trade will be still

Digitized by Google

blowing, boisterous and cool; out in the lagoon it will be blowing also, speeding the canoes; but the screen of bush completely intercepts it from the shore, and sleep and silence and companies of mosquitoes brood upon the towns.

We may thus be said to have taken Butaritari by surprise. A few inhabitants were still abroad in the north end, at which we landed. As we advanced, we were soon done with encounter, and seemed to explore a city of the dead. Only, between the posts of open houses, we could see the townsfolk stretched in the siesta, sometimes a family together veiled in a mosquito net, sometimes a single sleeper on a platform like a corpse on a bier.

The houses were of all dimensions, from those of toys to those of churches. Some might hold a battalion, some were so minute they could scarce receive a pair of lovers; only in the playroom, when the toys are mingled, do we meet such incongruities of scale. Many were open sheds; some took the form of roofed stages; others were walled and the walls pierced with little windows. A few were perched on piles in the lagoon; the rest stood at random on a green, through which the roadway made a ribbon of sand, or along the embankments of a sheet of water like a shallow dock. One and all were the creatures of a single tree, palm-tree wood and palm-tree leaf their materials; no nail had been driven, no hammer sounded, in their building,

Digitized by Google

and they were held together by lashings of palm-tree sinnet.

In the midst of the thoroughfare, the church stands like an island, a lofty and dim house with rows of windows; a rich tracery of framing sustains the roof; and through the door at either end the street shows in a vista. The proportions of the place, in such surroundings, and built of such materials, appeared august; we threaded the nave with a sentiment befitting visitors in a cathedral. Benches run along either side. In the midst, on a crazy dais, two chairs stand ready for the king and queen when they shall choose to worship; over their heads a hoop, apparently from a hogshead, depends by a strip of red cotton; and the hoop (which hangs askew) is dressed with streamers of the same material, red and white.

This was our first advertisement of the royal dignity, and presently we stood before its seat and centre. The palace is built of imported wood upon a European plan; the roof of corrugated iron, the yard enclosed with walls, the gate surmounted by a sort of lych-house. It cannot be called spacious; a labourer in the States is sometimes more commodiously lodged; but when we had the chance to see it within, we found it was enriched (beyond all island expectation) with coloured advertisements and cuts from the illustrated papers. Even before the gate some of the treasures of the crown stand public:

Digitized by Google

a bell of a good magnitude, two pieces of cannon, and a single shell. The bell cannot be rung nor the guns fired; they are curiosities, proofs of wealth, a part of the parade of the royalty, and stand to be admired like statues in a square. A straight gut of water like a canal runs almost to the palace door; the containing quay-walls excellently built of coral; over against the mouth, by what seems an effect of landscape art, the martello-like islet of the gaol breaks the lagoon. Vassal chiefs with tribute, neighbour monarchs come a-roving, might here sail in, view with surprise these extensive public works, and be awed by these mouths of silent cannon. It was impossible to see the place and not to fancy it designed for pageantry. But the elaborate theatre then stood empty; the royal house deserted, its doors and windows gaping; the whole quarter of the town immersed in silence. On the opposite bank of the canal, on a roofed stage, an ancient gentleman slept publicly, sole visible inhabitant; and beyond on the lagoon a canoe spread a striped lateen, the sole thing moving.

The canal is formed on the south by a pier or causeway with a parapet. At the far end the parapet stops, and the quay expands into an oblong peninsula in the lagoon, the breathing-place and summer parlour of the king. The midst is occupied by an open house or permanent marquee—called here a maniapa, or, as the word is now pronounced, a maniap'—at the lowest

Digitized by Google

estimation forty feet by sixty. The iron roof, lofty but exceedingly low-browed, so that a woman must stoop to enter, is supported externally on pillars of coral, within by a frame of wood. The floor is of broken coral, divided in aisles by the uprights of the frame; the house far enough from shore to catch the breeze, which enters freely and disperses the mosquitoes; and under the low eaves the sun is seen to glitter and the waves to dance on the lagoon.

It was now some while since we had met any but slumberers; and when we had wandered down the pier and stumbled at last into this bright shed, we were surprised to find it occupied by a society of wakeful people, some twenty souls in all, the court and guardsmen of Butaritari. The court ladies were busy making mats; the guardsmen yawned and sprawled. Half a dozen rifles lay on a rock and a cutlass was leaned against a pillar: the armoury of these drowsy musketeers. At the far end, a little closed house of wood displayed some tinsel curtains, and proved, upon examination, to be a privy on the European model. In front of this, upon some mats, lolled Tebureimoa, the king; behind him, on the panels of the house, two crossed rifles represented fasces. He wore pyjamas which sorrowfully misbecame his bulk; his nose was hooked and cruel, his body overcome with sodden corpulence, his eye timorous and dull; he seemed at once oppressed with drowsi-

Digitized by Google

ness and held awake by apprehension: a pepper rajah muddled with opium, and listening for the march of a Dutch army, looks perhaps not otherwise. We were to grow better acquainted, and first and last I had the same impression; he seemed always drowsy, yet always to hearken and start; and, whether from remorse or fear, there is no doubt he seeks a refuge in the abuse of drugs.

The rajah displayed no sign of interest in our coming. But the queen, who sat beside him in a purple sacque, was more accessible; and there was present an interpreter so willing that his volubility became at last the cause of our departure. He had greeted us upon our entrance: —"That is the honourable King, and I am his interpreter," he had said, with more stateliness than truth. For he held no appointment in the court, seemed extremely ill-acquainted with the island language, and was present, like ourselves, upon a visit of civility. Mr. Williams was his name: an American darkey, runaway ship's cook, and bar-keeper at *The Land we Live in* tavern, Butaritari. I never knew a man who had more words in his command or less truth to communicate; neither the gloom of the monarch, nor my own efforts to be distant, could in the least abash him; and when the scene closed, the darkey was left talking.

The town still slumbered, or had but just begun to turn and stretch itself; it was still plunged

Digitized by Google

in heat and silence. So much the more vivid was the impression that we carried away of the house upon the islet, the Micronesian Saul wakeful amid his guards, and his unmelodious David, Mr. Williams, chattering through the drowsy hours.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

THE FOUR BROTHERS

THE kingdom of Tebureimoa includes two islands, Great and Little Makin; some two thousand subjects pay him tribute, and two semi-independent chieftains do him qualified homage. The importance of the office is measured by the man; he may be a nobody, he may be absolute; and both extremes have been exemplified within the memory of residents.

On the death of King Tetimararoa, Tebureimoa's father, Nakaeia, the eldest son, succeeded. He was a fellow of huge physical strength, masterful, violent, with a certain barbaric thrift and some intelligence of men and business. Alone in his islands, it was he who dealt and profited; he was the planter and the merchant; and his subjects toiled for his behoof in servitude. When they wrought long and well their task-maker declared a holiday, and supplied and shared a general debauch. The scale of his providing was at times magnificent; six hundred dollars' worth of gin and brandy was set forth at once; the narrow land resounded with the

Digitized by Google

noise of revelry; and it was a common thing to see the subjects (staggering themselves) parade their drunken sovereign on the forehatch of a wrecked vessel, king and commons howling and singing as they went. At a word from Nakaeia's mouth the revel ended; Makin became once more an isle of slaves and of teetotalers; and on the morrow all the population must be on the roads or in the taro-patches toiling under his blood-shot eye.

The fear of Nakaeia filled the land. No regularity of justice was affected; there was no trial, there were no officers of the law; it seems there was but one penalty, the capital; and daylight assault and midnight murder were the forms of process. The king himself would play the executioner; and his blows were dealt by stealth, and with the help and countenance of none but his own wives. These were his oarswomen; one that caught a crab, he slew incontinently with the tiller; thus disciplined, they pulled him by night to the scene of his vengeance, which he would then execute alone and return well-pleased with his connubial crew. The inmates of the harem held a station hard for us to conceive. Beasts of draught, and driven by the fear of death, they were yet implicitly trusted with their sovereign's life; they were still wives and queens, and it was supposed that no man should behold their faces. They killed by the sight like basilisks; a chance view of one of those boatwomen was a crime to

Digitized by Google

be wiped out with blood. In the days of Nakaeia the palace was beset with some tall cocopalms which commanded the enclosure. It chanced one evening, while Nakaeia sat below at supper with his wives, that the owner of the grove was in a tree-top drawing palm-tree wine; it chanced that he looked down, and the king at the same moment looking up, their eyes encountered. Instant flight preserved the involuntary criminal. But during the remainder of that reign he must lurk and be hid by friends in remote parts of the isle; Nakaeia hunted him without remission, although still in vain; and the palms, accessories to the fact, were ruthlessly cut down. Such was the ideal of wifely purity in an isle where nubile virgins went naked as in paradise. And yet scandal found its way into Nakaeia's well-guarded harem. He was at that time the owner of a schooner, which he used for a pleasure-house, lodging on board as she lay anchored; and thither one day he summoned a new wife. She was one that had been sealed to him; that is to say (I presume), that he was married to her sister, for the husband of an elder sister has the call of the cadets. She would be arrayed for the occasion; she would come scented, garlanded, decked with fine mats and family jewels, for marriage, as her friends supposed; for death, as she well knew. "Tell me the man's name, and I will spare you," said Nakaeia. But the girl was staunch; she held

Digitized by Google

her peace, saved her lover; and the queens strangled her between the mats.

Nakaeia was feared; it does not appear that he was hated. Deeds that smell to us of murder wore to his subjects the reverend face of justice; his orgies made him popular; natives to this day recall with respect the firmness of his government; and even the whites, whom he long opposed and kept at arm's-length, give him the name (in the canonical South Sea phrase) of "a perfect gentleman when sober."

When he came to lie, without issue, on the bed of death, he summoned his next brother, Nanteitei, made him a discourse on royal policy, and warned him he was too weak to reign. The warning was taken to heart, and for some while the government moved on the model of Nakaeia's. Nanteitei dispensed with guards, and walked abroad alone with a revolver in a leather mail-bag. To conceal his weakness he affected a rude silence; you might talk to him all day; advice, reproof, appeal, and menace alike remained unanswered. The number of his wives was seventeen, many of them heiresses; for the royal house is poor, and marriage was in these days a chief means of buttressing the throne. Nakaeia kept his harem busy for himself; Nanteitei hired it out to others. In his days, for instance, Messrs. Wightman built a pier with a verandah at the north end of the town. The masonry was the work of the seventeen queens,

Digitized by Google

who toiled and waded there like fisher lasses; but the man who was to do the roofing durst not begin till they had finished, lest by chance he should look down and see them.

It was perhaps the last appearance of the harem gang. For some time already Hawaiian missionaries had been seated at Butaritari—Maka and Kanoa, two brave childlike men. Nakaeia would none of their doctrine; he was perhaps jealous of their presence; being human, he had some affection for their persons. In the house, before the eyes of Kanoa, he slew with his own hand three sailors of Oahu, crouching on their backs to knife them, and menacing the missionary if he interfered; yet he not only spared him at the moment, but recalled him afterwards (when he had fled) with some expressions of respect. Nanteitei, the weaker man, fell more completely under the spell. Maka, a light-hearted, lovable, yet in his own trade very rigorous man—gained and improved an influence on the king which soon grew paramount. Nanteitei, with the royal house, was publicly converted; and, with a severity which liberal missionaries disavow, the harem was at once reduced. It was a compendious act. The throne was thus impoverished, its influence shaken, the queens' relatives mortified, and sixteen chief women (some of great possessions) cast in a body on the market. I have been shipmates with a Hawaiian sailor who was suc-

Digitized by Google

cessively married to two of these *impromptu* widows, and successively divorced by both for misconduct. That two great and rich ladies (for both of these were rich) should have married "a man from another island" marks the dissolution of society. The laws besides were wholly remodelled, not always for the better. I love Maka as a man; as a legislator he has two defects: weak in the punishment of crime, stern to repress innocent pleasures.

War and revolution are the common successors of reform; yet Nanteitei died (of an overdose of chloroform) in quiet possession of the throne, and it was in the reign of the third brother, Nabakatokia, a man brave in body and feeble of character, that the storm burst. The rule of the high chiefs and notables seems to have always underlain and perhaps alternated with monarchy. The Old Men (as they were called) have a right to sit with the king in the Speak House and debate: and the king's chief superiority is a form of closure—"The Speaking is over." After the long monocracy of Nakaeia and the changes of Nanteitei, the Old Men were doubtless grown impatient of obscurity, and they were beyond question jealous of the influence of Maka. Calumny, or rather caricature, was called in use; a spoken cartoon ran round society; Maka was reported to have said in church that the king was the first man in the island and himself the second; and, stung by the supposed affront,

Digitized by Google

the chiefs broke into rebellion and armed gatherings. In the space of one forenoon the throne of Nakaeia was humbled in the dust. The king sat in the maniap' before the palace gate expecting his recruits, Maka by his side, both anxious men; and meanwhile, in the door of a house at the north entry of the town, a chief had taken post and diverted the succours as they came. They came singly or in groups, each with his gun or pistol slung about his neck. "Where are you going?" asked the chief. "The king called us," they would reply. "Here is your place. Sit down," returned the chief. With incredible disloyalty, all obeyed; and sufficient force being thus got together from both sides, Nabakatokia was summoned and surrendered. About this period, in almost every part of the group, the kings were murdered; and on Tapituea, the skeleton of the last hangs to this day in the chief Speak House of the isle, a menace to ambition. Nabakatokia was more fortunate; his life and the royal style were spared to him, but he was stripped of power. The Old Men enjoyed a festival of public speaking; the laws were continually changed, never enforced; the commons had an opportunity to regret the merits of Nakaeia; and the king, denied the resource of rich marriages and the service of a troop of wives, fell not only in disconsideration but in debt.

He died some months before my arrival in the

Digitized by Google

islands, and no one regretted him; rather all looked hopefully to his successor. This was by repute the hero of the family. Alone of the four brothers, he had issue, a grown son, Natiata, and a daughter three years old; it was to him, in the hour of the revolution, that Nabakatokia turned too late for help; and in earlier days he had been the right hand of the vigorous Nakaeia. Nantemat', *Mr. Corpse*, was his appalling nickname, and he had earned it well. Again and again, at the command of Nakaeia, he had surrounded houses in the dead of night, cut down the mosquito bars and butchered families. Here was the hand of iron; here was Nakaeia *redux*. He came, summoned from the tributary rule of Little Makin: he was installed, he proved a puppet and a trembler, the unwieldy shuttlecock of orators; and the reader has seen the remains of him in his summer parlour under the name of Tebureimoa.

The change in the man's character was much commented on in the island, and variously explained by opium and Christianity. To my eyes, there seemed no change at all, rather an extreme consistency. Mr. Corpse was afraid of his brother: King Tebureimoa is afraid of the Old Men. Terror of the first nerved him for deeds of desperation; fear of the second disables him for the least act of government. He played his part of bravo in the past, following the line of least resistance, butchering others in his own

Digitized by Google

defence: to-day, grown elderly and heavy, a convert, a reader of the Bible, perhaps a penitent, conscious at least of accumulated hatreds, and his memory charged with images of violence and blood, he capitulates to the Old Men, fuddles himself with opium, and sits among his guards in dreadful expectation. The same cowardice that put into his hand the knife of the assassin deprives him of the sceptre of a king.

A tale that I was told, a trifling incident that fell in my observation, depict him in his two capacities. A chief in Little Makin asked, in an hour of lightness, "Who is Kaeia?" A bird carried the saying; and Nakaeia placed the matter in the hands of a committee of three. Mr. Corpse was chairman; the second commissioner died before my arrival; the third was yet alive and green, and presented so venerable an appearance that we gave him the name of Abou ben Adhem. Mr. Corpse was troubled with a scruple; the man from Little Makin was his adopted brother; in such a case it was not very delicate to appear at all, to strike the blow (which it seems was otherwise expected of him) would be worse than awkward. "I will strike the blow," said the venerable Abou; and Mr. Corpse (surely with a sigh) accepted the compromise. The quarry was decoyed into the bush; he was set to carrying a log; and while his arms were raised Abou ripped up his belly at a blow. Justice being thus done, the commission, in a child-

Digitized by Google

ish horror, turned to flee. But their victim recalled them to his side. "You need not run away now," he said. "You have done this thing to me. Stay." He was some twenty minutes dying, and his murderers sat with him the while: a scene for Shakespeare. All the stages of a violent death, the blood, the failing voice, the decomposing features, the changed hue, are thus present in the memory of Mr. Corpse; and since he studied them in the brother he betrayed, he has some reason to reflect on the possibilities of treachery. I was never more sure of anything than the tragic quality of the king's thoughts; and yet I had but the one sight of him at unawares. I had once an errand for his ear. It was once more the hour of the siesta; but there were loiterers abroad, and these directed us to a closed house on the bank of the canal where Teburcimoa lay unguarded. We entered without ceremony, being in some haste. He lay on the floor upon a bed of mats, reading in his Gilbert Island Bible with compunction. On our sudden entrance the unwieldy man reared himself half-sitting so that the Bible rolled on the floor, stared on us a moment with blank eyes, and, having recognised his visitors, sank again upon the mats. So Eglon looked on Ehud.

The justice of facts is strange, and strangely just: Nakaeia, the author of these deeds, died at peace discoursing on the craft of kings; his

Digitized by Google

tool suffers daily death for his enforced complicity. Not the nature, but the congruity of men's deeds and circumstances damn and save them; and Tebureimoa from the first has been incongruously placed. At home, in a quiet bystreet of a village, the man had been a worthy carpenter, and, even bedevilled as he is, he shows some private virtues. He has no lands, only the use of such as are impignorate for fines; he cannot enrich himself in the old way by marriages; thrift is the chief pillar of his future, and he knows and uses it. Eleven foreign traders pay him a patent of a hundred dollars, some two thousand subjects pay capitation at the rate of a dollar for a man, half a dollar for a woman, and a shilling for a child: allowing for the exchange, perhaps a total of three hundred pounds a year. He had been some nine months on the throne: had bought his wife a silk dress and hat, figure unknown, and himself a uniform at three hundred dollars; had sent his brother's photograph to be enlarged in San Francisco at two hundred and fifty dollars; had greatly reduced that brother's legacy of debt; and had still sovereigns in his pocket. An affectionate brother, a good economist; he was besides a handy carpenter, and cobbled occasionally on the woodwork of the palace. It is not wonderful that Mr. Corpse has virtues; that Tebureimoa should have a diversion filled me with surprise.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

AROUND OUR HOUSE

WHEN we left the palace we were still but seafarers ashore; and within the hour we had installed our goods in one of the six foreign houses of Butaritari, namely, that usually occupied by Maka, the Hawaiian missionary. Two San Francisco firms are here established, Messrs. Crawford and Messrs. Wightman Brothers; the first hard by the palace of the mid town, the second at the north entry; each with a store and bar-room. Our house was in the Wightman compound, betwixt the store and bar, within a fenced enclosure. Across the road a few native houses nestled in the margin of the bush, and the green wall of palms rose solid, shutting out the breeze. A little sandy cove of the lagoon ran in behind, sheltered by a verandah pier, the labour of queens' hands. Here, when the tide was high, sailed boats lay to be loaded; when the tide was low, the boats took ground some half a mile away, and an endless series of natives descended the pier stair, tailed across the sand in strings and clusters, waded to the waist with

Digitized by Google

the bags of copra, and loitered backward to renew their charge. The mystery of the copra trade tormented me, as I sat and watched the profits drip on the stair and the sands.

In front, from shortly after four in the morning until nine at night, the folk of the town streamed by us intermittingly along the road: families going up the island to make copra on their lands; women bound for the bush to gather flowers against the evening toilet; and, twice a day, the toddy-cutters, each with his knife and shell. In the first grey of the morning, and again late in the afternoon, these would straggle past about their tree-top business, strike off here and there into the bush, and vanish from the face of earth. At about the same hour, if the tide be low in the lagoon, you are likely to be bound yourself across the island for a bath, and may enter close at their heels alleys of the palm wood. Right in front, although the sun is not yet risen, the east is already lighted with preparatory fires, and the huge accumulations of the trade-wind cloud glow with and heliograph the coming day. The breeze is in your face; overhead in the tops of the palms, its playthings, it maintains a lively bustle; look where you will, above or below, there is no human presence, only the earth and shaken forest. And right overhead the song of an invisible singer breaks from the thick leaves; from farther on a second tree-top answers; and beyond again, in the bosom of the woods, a still

Digitized by Google

more distant minstrel perches and sways and sings. So, all round the isle, the toddy-cutters sit on high, and are rocked by the trade, and have a view far to seaward, where they keep watch for sails, and like huge birds utter their songs in the morning. They sing with a certain lustiness and Bacchic glee; the volume of sound and the articulate melody fall unexpected from the tree-top, whence we anticipate the chattering of fowls. And yet in a sense these songs also are but chatter; the words are ancient, obsolete, and sacred; few comprehend them, perhaps no one perfectly; but it was understood the cutters "prayed to have good toddy, and sang of their old wars." The prayer is at least answered; and when the foaming shell is brought to your door, you have a beverage well "worthy of a grace." All forenoon you may return and taste; it only sparkles, and sharpens, and grows to be a new drink, not less delicious; but with the progress of the day the fermentation quickens and grows acid; in twelve hours it will be yeast for bread, in two days more a devilish intoxicant, the counsellor of crime.

The men are of a marked Arabian cast of features, often bearded and mustached, often gaily dressed, some with bracelets and anklets, all stalking hidalgo-like, and accepting salutations with a haughty lip. The hair (with the dandies of either sex) is worn turban-wise in a frizzled bush; and like the daggers of the Japanese, a

Digitized by Google

pointed stick (used for a comb) is thrust gallantly among the curls. The women from this bush of hair look forth enticingly: the race cannot be compared with the Tahitian for female beauty; I doubt even if the average be high; but some of the prettiest girls, and one of the handsomest women I ever saw, were Gilbertines. Butaritari, being the commercial centre of the group, is Europeanised; the coloured sacque or the white shift are common wear, the latter for the evening; the trade hat, loaded with flowers, fruit, and ribbons, is unfortunately not unknown; and the characteristic female dress of the Gilberts no longer universal. The *ridi* is its name: a cutty petticoat or fringe of the smoked fibre of cocoanut leaf, not unlike tarry string; the lower edge not reaching the mid-thigh, the upper adjusted so low upon the haunches that it seems to cling by accident. A sneeze, you think, and the lady must surely be left destitute. "The perilous, hairbreadth ridi" was our word for it; and in the conflict that rages over women's dress it has the misfortune to please neither side, the prudish condemning it as insufficient, the more frivolous finding it unlovely in itself. Yet if a pretty Gilbertine would look her best, that must be her costume. In that, and naked otherwise, she moves with an incomparable liberty and grace and life, that marks the poetry of Micronesia. Bundle her in a gown, the charm is fled, and she wriggles like an English woman.

Digitized by Google

Towards dusk the passers-by became more gorgeous. The men broke out in all the colours of the rainbow—or at least of the trade-room,—and both men and women began to be adorned and scented with new flowers. A small white blossom is the favourite, sometimes sown singly in a woman's hair like little stars, now composed in a thick wreath. With the night, the crowd sometimes thickened in the road, and the padding and brushing of bare feet became continuous; the promenades mostly grave, the silence only interrupted by some giggling and scampering of girls; even the children quiet. At nine, bed-time struck on a bell from the cathedral, and the life of the town ceased. At four the next morning the signal is repeated in the darkness, and the innocent prisoners set free; but for seven hours all must lie—I was about to say within doors, of a place where doors, and even walls, are an exception—housed, at least, under their airy roofs and clustered in the tents of the mosquito-nets. Suppose a necessary errand to occur, suppose it imperative to send abroad, the messenger must then go openly, advertising himself to the police with a huge brand of cocoanut, which flares from house to house like a moving bonfire. Only the police themselves go darkling, and grope in the night for misdemeanants. I used to hate their treacherous presence; their captain in particular, a crafty old man in white, lurked nightly about my premises till I

Digitized by Google

could have found it in my heart to beat him. But the rogue was privileged.

Not one of the eleven resident traders came to town, no captain cast anchor in the lagoon, but we saw him ere the hour was out. This was owing to our position between the store and the bar —the *Sans Souci*, as the last was called. Mr. Rick was not only Messrs. Wightman's manager, but consular agent for the States; Mrs. Rick was the only white woman on the island, and one of the only two in the archipelago; their house besides, with its cool verandahs, its bookshelves, its comfortable furniture, could not be rivalled nearer than Jaluit or Honolulu. Every one called in consequence, save such as might be prosecuting a South Sea quarrel, hingeing on the price of copra and the odd cent, or perhaps a difference about poultry. Even these, if they did not appear upon the north, would be presently visible to the southward, the *Sans Souci* drawing them as with cords. In an island with a total population of twelve white persons, one of the two drinking-shops might seem superfluous; but every bullet has its billet, and the double accommodation of Butaritari is found in practice highly convenient by the captains and the crews of ships: *The Land we Live in* being tacitly resigned to the forecastle, the *Sans Souci* tacitly reserved for the afterguard. So aristocratic were my habits, so commanding was my fear of Mr. Williams, that I have never visited

Digitized by Google

the first; but in the other, which was the club or rather the casino of the island, I regularly passed my evenings. It was small, but neatly fitted, and at night (when the lamp was lit) sparkled with glass and glowed with coloured pictures like a theatre at Christmas. The pictures were advertisements, the glass coarse enough, the carpentry amateur; but the effect, in that incongruous isle, was of unbridled luxury and inestimable expense. Here songs were sung, tales told, tricks performed, games played. The Ricks, ourselves, Norwegian Tom the bar-keeper, a captain or two from the ships, and perhaps three or four traders come down the island in their boats or by the road on foot, made up the usual company. The traders, all bred to the sea, take a humorous pride in their new business; "South Sea Merchants" is the title they prefer. "We are all sailors here"—"Merchants, if you please"—"*South Sea* Merchants,"—was a piece of conversation endlessly repeated, that never seemed to lose in savour. We found them at all times simple, genial, gay, gallant, and obliging; and, across some interval of time, recall with pleasure the traders of Butaritari. There was one black sheep indeed. I tell of him here where he lived, against my rule; for in this case I have no measure to preserve, and the man is typical of a class of ruffians that once disgraced the whole field of the South Seas, and still linger in the rarely visited isles of Micronesia. He had

Digitized by Google

the name on the beach of "a perfect gentleman when sober," but I never saw him otherwise than drunk. The few shocking and savage traits of the Micronesian he has singled out with the skill of a collector, and planted in the soil of his original baseness. He has been accused and acquitted of a treacherous murder; and has since boastfully owned it, which inclines me to suppose him innocent. His daughter is defaced by his erroneous cruelty, for it was his wife he had intended to disfigure, and, in the darkness of the night and the frenzy of coco-brandy, fastened on the wrong victim. The wife has since fled and harbours in the bush with natives; and the husband still demands from deaf ears her forcible restoration. The best of his business is to make natives drink, and then advance the money for the fine upon a lucrative mortgage. "Respect for whites" is the man's word: "What is the matter with this island is the want of respect for whites." On his way to Butaritari, while I was there, he spied his wife in the bush with certain natives and made a dash to capture her; whereupon one of her companions drew a knife, and the husband retreated: "Do you call that proper respect for whites?" he cried. At an early stage of the acquaintance we proved our respect for his kind of white by forbidding him our enclosure under pain of death. Thenceforth he lingered often in the neighbourhood with I knew not what sense of envy or design of mischief; his white,

Digitized by Google

handsome face (which I beheld with loathing) looked in upon us at all hours across the fence; and once from a safe distance, he avenged himself by shouting a recondite island insult, to us quite inoffensive, on his English lips incredibly incongruous.

Our enclosure, round which this composite of degradations wandered, was of some extent. In one corner was a trellis with a long table of rough boards. Here the Fourth of July feast had been held not long before with memorable consequences, yet to be set forth; here we took our meals; here entertained to a dinner the king and notables of Makin. In the midst was the house, with a verandah front and back, and three rooms within. In the verandah we slung our man-of-war hammocks, worked there by day, and slept at night. Within were beds, chairs, a round table, a fine hanging-lamp, and portraits of the royal family of Hawaii. Queen Victoria proves nothing; Kalakaua and Mrs. Bishop are diagnostic; and the truth is we were the stealthy tenants of the parsonage. On the day of our arrival Maka was away; faithless trustees unlocked his doors; and the dear rigorous man, the sworn foe of liquor and tobacco, returned to find his verandah littered with cigarettes and his parlour horrible with bottles. He made but one condition—on the round table, which he used in the celebration of the sacraments, he begged us to refrain from setting liquor; in all else he

Digitized by Google

bowed to the accomplished fact, refused rent, retired across the way into a native house, and, plying in his boat, beat the remotest quarters of the isle for provender. He found us pigs—I could not fancy where—no other pigs were visible; he brought us fowls and taro; when we gave our feast to the monarch and gentry, it was he who supplied the wherewithal, he who superintended the cooking, he who asked grace at table, and when the king's health was proposed, he also started the cheering with an English hip-hip-hip. There was never a more fortunate conception; the heart of the fatted king exulted in his bosom at the sound.

Take him for all in all, I have never known a more engaging creature than this parson of Butaritari: his mirth, his kindness, his noble, friendly feelings, brimmed from the man in speech and gesture. He loved to exaggerate, to act and overact the momentary part, to exercise his lungs and muscles, and to speak and laugh with his whole body. He had the morning cheerfulness of birds and healthy children; and his humour was infectious. We were next neighbours and met daily, yet our salutations lasted minutes at a stretch—shaking hands, slapping shoulders, capering like a pair of Merry-Andrews, laughing to split our sides upon some pleasantry that would scarce raise a titter in an infant-school. It might be five in the morning, the toddy-cutters just gone by, the road empty,

Digitized by Google

the shade of the island lying far on the lagoon: and the ebullition cheered me for the day.

Yet I always suspected Maka of a secret melancholy; these jubilant extremes could scarce be constantly maintained. He was besides long, and lean, and lined, and corded, and a trifle grizzled; and his Sabbath countenance was even saturnine. On that day we made a procession to the church, or (as I must always call it) the cathedral: Maka (a blot on the hot landscape) in tall hat, black frock-coat, black trousers; under his arm the hymn-book and the Bible; in his face, a reverent gravity:—beside him Mary his wife, a quiet, wise, and handsome elderly lady, seriously attired:—myself following with singular and moving thoughts. Long before, to the sound of bells and streams and birds, through a green Lothian glen, I had accompanied Sunday by Sunday a minister in whose house I lodged; and the likeness, and the difference, and the series of years and deaths, profoundly touched me. In the great, dusky, palm-tree cathedral the congregation rarely numbered thirty: the men on one side, the women on the other, myself posted (for a privilege) amongst the women, and the small missionary contingent gathered close around the platform, we were lost in that round vault. The lessons were read antiphonally, the flock was catechised, a blind youth repeated weekly a long string of psalms, hymns were sung —I never heard worse singing,—and the ser-

Digitized by Google

mon followed. To say I understood nothing were untrue; there were points that I learned to expect with certainty; the name of Honolulu, that of Kalakaua, the word Cap'n-man-o'-wa', the word ship, and a description of a storm at sea, infallibly occurred; and I was not seldom rewarded with the name of my own Sovereign in the bargain. The rest was but sound to the ears, silence for the mind: a plain expanse of tedium, rendered unbearable by heat, a hard chair, and the sight through the wide doors of the more happy heathen on the green. Sleep breathed on my joints and eyelids, sleep hummed in my ears; it reigned in the dim cathedral. The congregation stirred and stretched; they moaned, they groaned aloud; they yawned upon a singing note, as you may sometimes hear a dog when he has reached the tragic bitterest of boredom. In vain the preacher thumped the table; in vain he singled and addressed by name particular hearers. I was myself perhaps a more effective excitant; and at least to one old gentleman the spectacle of my successful struggles against sleep—and I hope they were successful—cheered the flight of time. He, when he was not catching flies or playing tricks upon his neighbours, gloated with a fixed, truculent eye upon the stages of my agony; and once, when the service was drawing towards a close, he winked at me across the church.

I write of the service with a smile; yet I was

Digitized by Google

always there—always with respect for Maka, always with admiration for his deep seriousness, his burning energy, the fire of his roused eye, the sincere and various accents of his voice. To see him weekly flogging a dead horse and blowing a cold fire was a lesson in fortitude and constancy. It may be a question whether if the mission were fully supported, and he was set free from business avocations, more might not result; I think otherwise myself; I think not neglect but rigour has reduced his flock, that rigour which has once provoked a revolution, and which to-day, in a man so lively and engaging, amazes the beholder. No song, no dance, no tobacco, no liquor, no alleviative of life—only toil and church-going; so says a voice from his face; and the face is the face of the Polynesian Esau, but the voice is the voice of a Jacob from a different world. And a Polynesian at the best makes a singular missionary in the Gilberts, coming from a country recklessly unchaste to one conspicuously strict; from a race hag-ridden with bogies to one comparatively bold against the terrors of the dark. The thought was stamped one morning in my mind, when I chanced to be abroad by moonlight, and saw all the town lightless, but the lamp faithfully burning by the missionary's bed. It requires no law, no fire, and no scouting police, to withhold Maka and his countrymen from wandering in the night unlighted.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

A TALE OF A TAPU

ON the morrow of our arrival (Sunday, 14th July, 1889) our photographers were early stirring. Once more we traversed a silent town; many were yet abed and asleep; some sat drowsily in their open houses; there was no sound of intercourse or business. In that hour before the shadows, the quarter of the palace and canal seemed like a landing-place in the *Arabian Nights* or from the classic poets; here were the fit destination of some "faery frigot," here some adventurous prince might step ashore among new characters and incidents; and the island prison, where it floated on the luminous face of the lagoon, might have passed for the repository of the Grail. In such a scene, and at such an hour, the impression received was not so much of foreign travel—rather of past ages; it seemed not so much degrees of latitude that we had crossed, as centuries of time that we had re-ascended; leaving, by the same steps, home and to-day. A few children followed us, mostly nude, all silent; in the clear, weedy waters of the

Digitized by Google

canal some silent damsels waded, baring their brown thighs; and to one of the maniap's before the palace gate we were attracted by a low but stirring hum of speech.

The oval shed was full of men sitting cross-legged. The king was there in striped pyjamas, his rear protected by four guards with Winchesters, his air and bearing marked by unwonted spirit and decision; tumblers and black bottles went the round; and the talk, throughout loud, was general and animated. I was inclined at first to view this scene with suspicion. But the hour appeared unsuitable for a carouse; drink was besides forbidden equally by the law of the land and the canons of the church; and while I was yet hesitating, the king's rigorous attitude disposed of my last doubt. We had come, thinking to photograph him surrounded by his guards, and at the first word of the design his piety revolted. We were reminded of the day—the Sabbath—in which thou shalt take no photographs—and returned with a flea in our ear, bearing the rejected camera.

At church, a little later, I was struck to find the throne unoccupied. So nice a Sabbatarian might have found the means to be present; perhaps my doubts revived; and before I got home they were transformed to certainties. Tom, the bar-keeper of the *Sans Souci*, was in conversation with two emissaries from the court. The "keen," they said, wanted "din," failing

Digitized by Google

which, "perandi."[1] No din, was Tom's reply, and no perandi; but "pira" if they pleased. It seems they had no use for beer, and departed sorrowing.

"Why, what is the meaning of all this?" I asked. "Is the island on the spree?"

Such was the fact. On the 4th of July a feast had been made, and the king, at the suggestion of the whites, had raised the tapu against liquor. There is a proverb about horses; it scarce applies to the superior animal of whom it may be rather said, that any one can start him drinking, not any twenty can prevail on him to stop. The tapu, raised ten days before, was not yet reimposed; for ten days the town had been passing the bottle or lying (as we had seen it the afternoon before) in hoggish sleep; and the king, moved by the Old Men and his own appetites, continued to maintain the liberty, to squander his savings on liquor, and to join in and lead the debauch. The whites were the authors of this crisis; it was upon their own proposal that the freedom had been granted at the first; and for a while, in the interests of trade, they were doubtless pleased it should continue. That pleasure had now sometime ceased; the bout had been prolonged (it was conceded) unduly; and it now began to be a question how it might conclude. Hence Tom's refusal. Yet that refusal was avowedly only for the moment, and it was avowedly un-

[1] Gin and brandy.

Digitized by Google

availing; the king's foragers, denied by Tom at the *Sans Souci*, would be supplied at *The Land we Live in* by the gobbling Mr. Williams.

The degree of the peril was not easy to measure at the time, and I am inclined to think now it was easy to exaggerate. Yet the conduct of drunkards even at home is always matter for anxiety; and at home our populations are not armed from the highest to the lowest with revolvers and repeating rifles, neither do we go on a debauch by the whole townful—and I might rather say, by the whole polity—king, magistrates, police, and army joining in one common scene of drunkenness. It must be thought besides that we were here in barbarous islands, rarely visited, lately and partly civilised. First and last, a really considerable number of whites have perished in the Gilberts, chiefly through their own misconduct; and the natives have displayed in at least one instance a disposition to conceal an accident under a butchery, and leave nothing but dumb bones. This last was the chief consideration against a sudden closing of the bars; the bar-keepers stood in the immediate breach and dealt direct with madmen; too surly a refusal might at any moment precipitate a blow, and the blow might prove the signal for massacre.

Monday, 15th.—At the same hour we returned to the same maniap'. Kümmel (of all drinks) was served in tumblers; in the midst sat the

Digitized by Google

crown prince, a fatted youth, surrounded by fresh bottles and busily plying the corkscrew; and king, chief, and commons showed the loose mouth, the uncertain joints, and the blurred and animated eye of the early drinker. It was plain we were impatiently expected; the king retired with alacrity to dress, the guards were despatched after their uniforms; and we were left to await the issue of these preparations with a shedful of tipsy natives. The orgie had proceeded further than on Sunday. The day promised to be of great heat; it was already sultry, the courtiers were already fuddled; and still the kümmel continued to go round, and the crown prince to play butler. Flemish freedom followed upon Flemish excess; and a funny dog, a handsome fellow, gaily dressed, and with a full turban of frizzed hair, delighted the company with a humorous courtship of a lady in a manner not to be described. It was our diversion, in this time of waiting, to observe the gathering of the guards. They have European arms, European uniforms, and (to their sorrow) European shoes. We saw one warrior (like Mars) in the article of being armed; two men and a stalwart woman were scarce strong enough to boot him; and after a single appearance on parade the army is crippled for a week.

At last, the gates under the king's house opened; the army issued, one behind another, with guns and epaulettes; the colours stooped under the

Digitized by Google

gateway; majesty followed in his uniform bedizened with gold lace; majesty's wife came next in a hat and feathers, and an ample trained silk gown; the royal imps succeeded; there stood the pageantry of Makin marshalled on its chosen theatre. Dickens might have told how serious they were; how tipsy; how the king melted and streamed under his cocked hat; how he took station by the larger of his two cannons—austere, majestic, but not truly vertical; how the troops huddled, and were straightened out, and clubbed again; how they and their firelocks raked at various inclinations like the masts of ships; and how an amateur photographer reviewed, arrayed, and adjusted them, to see his dispositions change before he reached the camera.

The business was funny to see; I do not know that it is graceful to laugh at; and our report of these transactions was received on our return with the shaking of grave heads.

The day had begun ill; eleven hours divided us from sunset; and at any moment, on the most trifling chance, the trouble might begin. The Wightman compound was in a military sense untenable, commanded on three sides by houses and thick bush; the town was computed to contain over a thousand stand of excellent new arms; and retreat to the ships, in the case of an alert, was a recourse not to be thought of. Our talk that morning must have closely reproduced the talk in English garrisons before the Sepoy mu-

Digitized by Google

tiny; the sturdy doubt that any mischief was in prospect, the sure belief that (should any come) there was nothing left but to go down fighting, the half amused, half anxious attitude of mind in which we were awaiting fresh developments.

The kümmel soon ran out; we were scarce returned before the king had followed us in quest of more. Mr. Corpse was now divested of his more awful attitude, the lawless bulk of him again encased in striped pyjamas; a guardsman brought up the rear with his rifle at the trail; and his majesty was further accompanied by a Rarotongan whalerman and the playful courtier with the turban of frizzed hair. There was never a more lively deputation. The whalerman was gapingly, tearfully tipsy; the courtier walked on air; the king himself was even sportive. Seated in a chair in the Ricks' sitting room, he bore the brunt of our prayers and menaces unmoved. He was even rated, plied with historic instances, threatened with the men-of-war, ordered to restore the tapu on the spot—and nothing in the least affected him. It should be done to-morrow, he said; to-day it was beyond his power, to-day he durst not. "Is that royal?" cried indignant Mr. Rick. No, it was not royal; had the king been of a royal character we should ourselves have held a different language; and royal or not, he had the best of the dispute. The terms indeed were hardly equal; for the king was the only man who could restore the

Digitized by Google

tapu, but the Ricks were not the only people who sold drink. He had but to hold his ground on the first question, and they were sure to weaken on the second. A little struggle they still made for the fashion's sake; and then one exceedingly tipsy deputation departed, greatly rejoicing, a case of brandy wheeling beside them in a barrow. The Rarotongan (whom I had never seen before) wrung me by the hand like a man bound on a far voyage. "My dear frien'!" he cried, "good-bye, my dear frien'!"—tears of kümmel standing in his eyes; the king lurched as he went, the courtier ambled,—a strange party of intoxicated children to be intrusted with that barrowful of madness.

You could never say the town was quiet; all morning there was a ferment in the air, an aimless movement and congregation of natives in the street. But it was not before half-past one that a sudden hubbub of voices called us from the house, to find the whole white colony already gathered on the spot as by concerted signal. The *Sans Souci* was overrun with rabble, the stair and verandah thronged. From all these throats an inarticulate babbling cry went up incessantly; it sounded like the bleating of young lambs, but angrier. In the road his royal highness (whom I had seen so lately in the part of butler) stood crying upon Tom; on the top step, tossed in the hurly-burly, Tom was shouting to the prince. Yet a while the pack swayed about

Digitized by Google

the bar, vociferous. Then came a brutal impulse; the mob reeled, and returned and was rejected; the stair showed a stream of heads; and there shot into view, through the disbanding ranks, three men violently dragging in their midst a fourth. By his hair and his hands, his head forced as low as his knees, his face concealed, he was wrenched from the verandah and whisked along the road into the village, howling as he disappeared. Had his face been raised, we should have seen it bloodied, and the blood was not his own. The courtier with the turban of frizzed hair had paid the costs of this disturbance with the lower part of one ear.

So the brawl passed with no other casualty than might seem comic to the inhumane. Yet we looked round on serious faces and—a fact that spoke volumes—Tom was putting up the shutters on the bar. Custom might go elsewhither, Mr. Williams might profit as he pleased, but Tom had had enough of bar-keeping for that day. Indeed the event had hung on a hair. A man had sought to draw a revolver—on what quarrel I could never learn, and perhaps he himself could not have told; one shot, when the room was so crowded, could scarce have failed to take effect; where many were armed and all tipsy, it could scarce have failed to draw others; and the woman who spied the weapon and the man who seized it may very well have saved the white community.

Digitized by Google

The mob insensibly melted from the scene; and for the rest of the day our neighbourhood was left in peace and a good deal in solitude. But the tranquillity was only local; *din* and *perandi* still flowed in other quarters; and we had one more sight of Gilbert Island violence. In the church, where we had wandered photographing, we were startled by a sudden piercing outcry. The scene, looking forth from the doors of that great hall of shadow, was unforgettable. The palms, the quaint and scattered houses, the flag of the island streaming from its tall staff, glowed with intolerable sunshine. In the midst two women rolled fighting on the grass. The combatants were the more easy to be distinguished, because the one was stripped to the *ridi* and the other wore a holoku (sacque) of some lively colour. The first was uppermost, her teeth locked in her adversary's face, shaking her like a dog; the other impotently fought and scratched. So for a moment we saw them wallow and grapple there like vermin; then the mob closed and shut them in.

It was a serious question that night if we should sleep ashore. But we were travellers, folk that had come far in quest of the adventurous; on the first sign of an adventure it would have been a singular inconsistency to have withdrawn; and we sent on board instead for our revolvers. Mindful of Taahauku, Mr. Rick, Mr. Osbourne, and Mrs. Stevenson held an assault

Digitized by Google

of arms on the public highway, and fired at bottles to the admiration of the natives. Captain Reid of the *Equator* stayed on shore with us to be at hand in case of trouble, and we retired to bed at the accustomed hour, agreeably excited by the day's events. The night was exquisite, the silence enchanting; yet as I lay in my hammock looking on the strong moonshine and the quiescent palms, one ugly picture haunted me of the two women, the naked and the clad, locked in that hostile embrace. The harm done was probably not much, yet I could have looked on death and massacre with less revolt. The return to these primeval weapons, the vision of man's beastliness, of his ferality, shocked in me a deeper sense than that with which we count the cost of battles. There are elements in our state and history which it is a pleasure to forget, which it is perhaps the better wisdom not to dwell on. Crime, pestilence, and death are in the day's work; the imagination readily accepts them. It instinctively rejects, on the contrary, whatever shall call up the image of our race upon its lowest terms, as the partner of beasts, beastly itself, dwelling pell-mell and hugger-mugger, hairy man with hairy woman, in the caves of old. And yet to be just to barbarous islanders we must not forget the slums and dens of our cities: I must not forget that I have passed dinnerward through Soho, and seen that which cured me of my dinner.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

A TALE OF A TAPU—*Continued*

TUESDAY, July 16.—It rained in the night, sudden and loud, in Gilbert Island fashion. Before the day, the crowing of a cock aroused me and I wandered in the compound and along the street. The squall was blown by, the moon shone with incomparable lustre, the air lay dead as in a room, and yet all the isle sounded as under a strong shower, the eaves thickly pattering, the lofty palms dripping at larger intervals and with a louder note. In this bold nocturnal light the interior of the houses lay inscrutable, one lump of blackness, save when the moon glinted under the roof, and made a belt of silver, and drew the slanting shadows of the pillars on the floor. Nowhere in all the town was any lamp or ember; not a creature stirred; I thought I was alone to be awake; but the police were faithful to their duty; secretly vigilant, keeping account of time; and a little later, the watchman struck slowly and repeatedly on the cathedral bell; four o'clock the warning signal. It seemed strange that, in a town resigned to drunkenness and tumult,

Digitized by Google

curfew and réveillé should still be sounded and still obeyed.

The day came, and brought little change. The place still lay silent; the people slept, the town slept. Even the few who were awake, mostly women and children, held their peace and kept within under the strong shadow of the thatch, where you must stop and peer to see them. Through the desert streets, and past the sleeping houses, a deputation took its way at an early hour to the palace; the king was suddenly awakened, and must listen (probably with a headache) to unpalatable truths. Mrs. Rick, being a sufficient mistress of that difficult tongue, was spokeswoman; she explained to the sick monarch that I was an intimate personal friend of Queen Victoria's; that immediately on my return I should make her a report upon Butaritari; and that if my house should have been again invaded by natives, a man-of-war would be despatched to make reprisals. It was scarce the fact—rather a just and necessary parable of the fact, corrected for latitude; and it certainly told upon the king. He was much affected; he had conceived the notion (he said) that I was a man of some importance, but not dreamed it was as bad as this; and the missionary house was tapu'd under a fine of fifty dollars.

So much was announced on the return of the deputation; not any more; and I gathered subsequently that much more had passed. The

Digitized by Google

protection gained was welcome. It had been the most annoying and not the least alarming feature of the day before, that our house was periodically filled with tipsy natives, twenty or thirty at a time, begging drink, fingering our goods, hard to be dislodged, awkward to quarrel with. Queen Victoria's friend (who was soon promoted to be her son) was free from these intrusions. Not only my house, but my neighbourhood as well, was left in peace; even on our walks abroad we were guarded and prepared for; and, like great persons visiting a hospital, saw only the fair side. For the matter of a week we were thus suffered to go out and in and live in a fool's paradise, supposing the king to have kept his word, the tapu to be revived and the island once more sober.

Tuesday, July 23.—We dined under a bare trellis erected for the Fourth of July; and here we used to linger by lamplight over coffee and tobacco. In that climate evening approaches without sensible chill; the wind dies out before sunset; heaven glows a while and fades, and darkens into the blueness of the tropical night; swiftly and insensibly the shadows thicken, the stars multiply their number; you look around you and the day is gone. It was then that we would see our Chinaman draw near across the compound in a lurching sphere of light, divided by his shadows; and with the coming of the lamp the night closed about the table. The faces of

Digitized by Google

the company, the spars of the trellis, stood out suddenly bright on a ground of blue and silver, faintly designed with palm-tops and the peaked roofs of houses. Here and there the gloss upon a leaf, or the fracture of a stone, returned an isolated sparkle. All else had vanished. We hung there, illuminated like a galaxy of stars *in vacuo;* we sat, manifest and blind, amid the general ambush of the darkness; and the islanders, passing with light footfalls and low voices in the sand of the road, lingered to observe us, unseen.

On Tuesday the dusk had fallen, the lamp had just been brought, when a missile struck the table with a rattling smack and rebounded past my ear. Three inches to one side and this page had never been written; for the thing travelled like a cannon ball. It was supposed at the time to be a nut, though even at the time I thought it seemed a small one and fell strangely.

Wednesday, July 24.—The dusk had fallen once more, and the lamp been just brought out, when the same business was repeated. And again the missile whistled past my ear. One nut I had been willing to accept; a second, I rejected utterly. A cocoa-nut does not come slinging along on a windless evening, making an angle of about fifteen degrees with the horizon; cocoa-nuts do not fall on successive nights at the same hour and spot; in both cases, besides, a specific moment seemed to have been chosen, that when

Digitized by Google

the lamp was just carried out, a specific person threatened, and that the head of the family. I may have been right or wrong, but I believed I was the mark of some intimidation; believed the missile was a stone, aimed not to hit, but to frighten.

No idea makes a man more angry. I ran into the road, where the natives were as usual promenading in the dark; Maka joined me with a lantern; and I ran from one to another, glared in quite innocent faces, put useless questions, and proffered idle threats. Thence I carried my wrath (which was worthy the son of any queen in history) to the Ricks. They heard me with depression, assured me this trick of throwing a stone into a family dinner was not new; that it meant mischief, and was of a piece with the alarming disposition of the natives. And then the truth, so long concealed from us, came out. The king had broken his promise, he had defied the deputation; the tapu was still dormant, *The Land we Live in* still selling drink, and that quarter of the town disturbed and menaced by perpetual broils. But there was worse ahead: a feast was now preparing for the birthday of the little princess; and the tributary chiefs of Kuma and Little Makin were expected daily. Strong in a following of numerous and somewhat savage clansmen, each of these was believed, like a Douglas of old, to be of doubtful loyalty. Kuma (a little pot-bellied fellow) never visited

Digitized by Google

the palace, never entered the town, but sat on the beach on a mat, his gun across his knees, parading his mistrust and scorn; Karaiti of Makin, although he was more bold, was not supposed to be more friendly; and not only were these vassals jealous of the throne, but the followers on either side shared in the animosity. Brawls had already taken place; blows had passed which might at any moment be repaid in blood. Some of the strangers were already here and already drinking; if the debauch continued after the bulk of them had come, a collision, perhaps a revolution, was to be expected.

The sale of drink is in this group a measure of the jealousy of traders; one begins, the others are constrained to follow; and to him who has the most gin, and sells it the most recklessly, the lion's share of copra is assured. It is felt by all to be an extreme expedient, neither safe, decent, nor dignified. A trader on Tarawa, heated by an eager rivalry, brought many cases of gin. He told me he sat afterwards day and night in his house till it was finished, not daring to arrest the sale, not venturing to go forth, the bush all round him filled with howling drunkards. At night, above all, when he was afraid to sleep and heard shots and voices about him in the darkness, his remorse was black.

"My God!" he reflected, "if I was to lose my life on such a wretched business!" Often and often, in the story of the Gilberts, this scene has

Digitized by Google

been repeated; and the remorseful trader sat beside his lamp, longing for the day, listening with agony for the sound of murder, registering resolutions for the future. For the business is easy to begin, but hazardous to stop. The natives are in their way a just and law-abiding people, mindful of their debts, docile to the voice of their own institutions; when the tapu is reenforced they will cease drinking; but the white who seeks to antedate the movement by refusing liquor does so at his peril.

Hence, in some degree, the anxiety and helplessness of Mr. Rick. He and Tom, alarmed by the rabblement of the *Sans Souci*, had stopped the sale; they had done so without danger, because *The Land we Live in* still continued selling; it was claimed, besides, that they had been the first to begin. What step could be taken? Could Mr. Rick visit Mr. Muller (with whom he was not on terms) and address him thus: "I was getting ahead of you, now you are getting ahead of me, and I ask you to forego your profit. I got my place closed in safety, thanks to your continuing; but now I think you have continued long enough. I begin to be alarmed; and because I am afraid I ask you to confront a certain danger"? It was not to be thought of. Something else had to be found; and there was one person at one end of the town who was at least not interested in copra. There was little else to be said in favour of myself as an ambassador.

Digitized by Google

I had arrived in the Wightman schooner, I was living in the Wightman compound, I was the daily associate of the Wightman coterie. It was egregious enough that I should now intrude unasked in the private affairs of Crawford's agent, and press upon him the sacrifice of his interests and the venture of his life. But bad as I might be, there was none better; since the affair of the stone I was, besides, sharp-set to be doing, the idea of a delicate interview attracted me, and I thought it policy to show myself abroad.

The night was very dark. There was service in the church, and the building glimmered through all its crevices like a dim Kirk Allowa'. I saw few other lights, but was indistinctly aware of many people stirring in the darkness, and a hum and sputter of low talk that sounded stealthy. I believe (in the old phrase) my beard was sometimes on my shoulder as I went. Muller's was but partly lighted, and quite silent, and the gate was fastened. I could by no means manage to undo the latch. No wonder, since I found it afterwards to be four or five feet long—a fortification in itself. As I still fumbled, a dog came on the inside and snuffed suspiciously at my hands, so that I was reduced to calling, "House ahoy!" Mr. Muller came down and put his chin across the paling in the dark. "Who is that?" said he, like one who has no mind to welcome strangers.

"My name is Stevenson," said I.

Digitized by Google

"O, Mr. Stevens! I didn't know you. Come inside."

We stepped into the dark store, when I leaned upon the counter and he against the wall. All the light came from the sleeping-room, where I saw his family being put to bed; it struck full in my face, but Mr. Muller stood in shadow. No doubt he expected what was coming, and sought the advantage of position; but for a man who wished to persuade and had nothing to conceal, mine was the preferable.

"Look here," I began, "I hear you are selling to the natives."

"Others have done that before me," he returned pointedly.

"No doubt," said I, "and I have nothing to do with the past, but the future. I want you to promise you will handle these spirits carefully."

"Now what is your motive in this?" he asked, and then, with a sneer, "Are you afraid of your life?"

"That is nothing to the purpose," I replied. "I know, and you know, these spirits ought not to be used at all."

"Tom and Mr. Rick have sold them before."

"I have nothing to do with Tom and Mr. Rick. All I know is I have heard them both refuse."

"No, I suppose you have nothing to do with them. Then you are just afraid of your life."

Digitized by Google

"Come now," I cried, being perhaps a little stung, "you know in your heart I am asking a reasonable thing. I don't ask you to lose your profit—though I would prefer to see no spirits brought here, as you would——"

"I don't say I wouldn't. I didn't begin this," he interjected.

"No, I don't suppose you did," said I. "And I don't ask you to lose; I ask you to give me your word, man to man, that you will make no native drunk."

Up to now Mr. Muller had maintained an attitude very trying to my temper; but he had maintained it with difficulty, his sentiment being all upon my side; and here he changed ground for the worse. "It isn't me that sells," said he.

"No, it's that nigger," I agreed. "But he's yours to buy and sell; you have your hand on the nape of his neck; and I ask you—I have my wife here—to use the authority you have."

He hastily returned to his old ward. "I don't deny I could if I wanted," said he. "But there's no danger, the natives are all quiet. You're just afraid of your life."

I do not like to be called a coward, even by implication; and here I lost my temper and propounded an untimely ultimatum. "You had better put it plain," I cried. "Do you mean to refuse me what I ask?"

"I don't want either to refuse it or grant it," he replied.

Digitized by Google

"You'll find you have to do the one thing or the other, and right now!" I cried, and then, striking into a happier vein, "Come," said I, "you're a better sort than that. I see what's wrong with you—you think I came from the opposite camp. I see the sort of man you are, and you know that what I ask is right."

Again he changed ground. "If the natives get any drink, it isn't safe to stop them," he objected.

"I'll be answerable for the bar," I said. "We are three men and four revolvers; we'll come at a word, and hold the place against the village."

"You don't know what you're talking about; it's too dangerous!" he cried.

"Look here," said I, "I don't mind much about losing that life you talk so much of; but I mean to lose it the way I want to, and that is, putting a stop to all this beastliness."

He talked a while about his duty to the firm; I minded not at all, I was secure of victory. He was but waiting to capitulate, and looked about for any potent to relieve the strain. In the gush of light from the bedroom door I spied a cigar-holder on the desk. "That is well coloured," said I.

"Will you take a cigar?" said he.

I took it and held it up unlighted. "Now," said I, "you promise me."

"I promise you you won't have any trouble

Digitized by Google

from natives that have drunk at my place," he replied.

"That is all I ask," said I, and showed it was not by immediately offering to try his stock.

So far as it was anyway critical our interview here ended. Mr. Muller had thenceforth ceased to regard me as an emissary from his rivals, dropped his defensive attitude, and spoke as he believed. I could make out that he would already, had he dared, have stopped the sale himself. Not quite daring, it may be imagined how he resented the idea of interference from those who had (by his own statement) first led him on, then deserted him in the breach, and now (sitting themselves in safety) egged him on to a new peril, which was all gain to them, all loss to him. I asked him what he thought of the danger from the feast.

"I think worse of it than any of you," he answered. "They were shooting around here last night, and I heard the balls too. I said to myself, 'That's bad.' What gets me is why you should be making this row up at your end. I should be the first to go."

It was a thoughtless wonder. The consolation of being second is not great; the fact, not the order of going—there was our concern.

Scott talks moderately of looking forward to a time of fighting "with a feeling that resembled pleasure." The resemblance seems rather an identity. In modern life, contact is ended; man

Digitized by Google

grows impatient of endless manœuvres; and to approach the fact, to find ourselves where we can push our advantage home, and stand a fair risk, and see at last what we are made of, stirs the blood. It was so at least with all my family, who bubbled with delight at the approach of trouble; and we sat deep into the night like a pack of schoolboys, preparing the revolvers and arranging plans against the morrow. It promised certainly to be a busy and eventful day. The Old Men were to be summoned to confront me on the question of the tapu; Muller might call us at any moment to garrison his bar; and suppose Muller to fail, we decided in a family council to take that matter into our own hands, *The Land we Live in* at the pistol's mouth, and with the polysyllabic Williams, dance to a new tune. As I recall our humour, I think it would have gone hard with the mulatto.

Wednesday, July 24.—It was as well, and yet it was disappointing that these thunder-clouds rolled off in silence. Whether the Old Men recoiled from an interview with Queen Victoria's son, whether Muller had secretly intervened, or whether the step flowed naturally from the fears of the king and the nearness of the feast, the tapu was early that morning re-enforced; not a day too soon, from the manner the boats began to arrive thickly, and the town was filled with the big rowdy vassals of Karaiti.

The effect lingered for some time on the minds

Digitized by Google

of the traders; it was with the approval of all present that I helped to draw up a petition to the United States, praying for a law against the liquor trade in the Gilberts; and it was at this request that I added, under my own name, a brief testimony of what had passed;—useless pains; since the whole reposes, probably unread and possibly unopened, in a pigeon-hole at Washington.

Sunday, July 28.—This day we had the afterpiece of the debauch. The king and queen, in European clothes, and followed by armed guards, attended church for the first time, and sat perched aloft in a precarious dignity under the barrel-hoops. Before sermon his majesty clambered from the dais, stood lopsidedly upon the gravel floor, and in a few words abjured drinking. The queen followed suit with a yet briefer allocution. All the men in church were next addressed in turn; each held up his right hand, and the affair was over—throne and church were reconciled.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

THE FIVE DAYS' FESTIVAL

THURSDAY, July 25.—The street was this day much enlivened by the presence of the men from Little Makin; they average taller than Butaritarians, and, being on a holiday, went wreathed with yellow leaves and gorgeous in vivid colours. They are said to be more savage, and to be proud of the distinction. Indeed, it seemed to us they swaggered in the town, like plaided Highlanders upon the streets of Inverness, conscious of barbaric virtues.

In the afternoon the summer parlour was observed to be packed with people; others standing outside and stooping to peer under the eaves, like children at home about a circus. It was the Makin company, rehearsing for the day of competition. Karitia sat in the front row close to the singers, where we were summoned (I suppose in honour of Queen Victoria) to join him. A strong breathless heat reigned under the iron roof, and the air was heavy with the scent of wreaths. The singers, with fine mats about their loins, cocoa-nut feathers set in rings upon

Digitized by Google

their fingers, and their heads crowned with yellow leaves, sat on the floor by companies. A varying number of soloists stood up for different songs; and these bore the chief part in the music. But the full force of the companies, even when not singing, contributed continuously to the effect, and marked the ictus of the measure, mimicking, grimacing, casting up their heads and eyes, fluttering the feathers on their fingers, clapping hands, or beating (loud as a kettle-drum) on the left breast: the time was exquisite, the music barbarous, but full of conscious art. I noted some devices constantly employed. A sudden change would be introduced (I think of key) with no break of the measure, but emphasised by a sudden dramatic heightening of the voice and a swinging general gesticulation. The voices of the soloists would begin far apart in a rude discord, and gradually draw together to a unison; which, when they had reached, they were joined and drowned by the full chorus. The ordinary, hurried, barking, unmelodious movement of the voices would at times be broken and glorified by a psalm-like strain of melody, often well constructed, or seeming so by contrast. There was much variety of measure, and towards the end of each piece, when the fun became fast and furious, a recourse to this gure—

Digitized by Google

It is difficult to conceive what fire and devilry they get into these hammering finales; all go together, voices, hands, eyes, leaves, and fluttering finger-rings; the chorus swings to the eye, the song throbs on the ear; the faces are convulsed with enthusiasm and effort.

Presently the troop stood up in a body, the drums forming a half-circle for the soloists, who were sometimes five or even more in number. The songs that followed were highly dramatic; though I had none to give me any explanation, I would at times make out some shadowy but decisive outline of a plot; and I was continually reminded of certain quarrelsome concerted scenes in grand operas at home; just so the single voices issue from and fall again into the general volume; just so do the performers separate and crowd together, brandish the raised hand, and roll the eye to heaven—or the gallery. Already this is beyond the Thespian model; the art of this people is already past the embryo; song, dance, drums, quartette and solo—it is the drama full developed although still in miniature. Of all so-called dancing in the South Seas, that which I saw in Butaritari stands easily the first. The *hula*, as it may be viewed by the speedy globe-trotter in Honolulu, is surely the most dull of man's inventions, and the spectator yawns under its length as at a college lecture or a parliamentary debate. But the Gilbert Island dance leads on the mind; it thrills, rouses, subjugates;

Digitized by Google

it has the essence of all art, an unexplored imminent significance. Where so many are engaged, and where all must make (at a given moment) the same swift, elaborate, and often arbitrary movement, the toil of rehearsal is of course extreme. But they begin as children. A child and a man may often be seen together in a maniap': the man sings and gesticulates, the child stands before him with streaming tears and tremulously copies him in act and sound; it is the Gilbert Island artist learning (as all artists must) his art in sorrow.

I may seem to praise too much; here is a passage from my wife's diary, which proves that I was not alone in being moved, and completes the picture:—"The conductor gave the cue, and all the dancers, waving their arms, swaying their bodies, and clapping their breasts in perfect time, opened with an introductory. The performers remained seated, except two, and once three, and twice a single soloist. These stood in the group, making a slight movement with the feet and rhythmical quiver of the body as they sang. There was a pause after the introductory, and then the real business of the opera—for it was no less—began; an opera where every singer was an accomplished actor. The leading man, in an impassioned ecstasy which possessed him from head to foot, seemed transfigured; once it was as though a strong wind had swept over the stage—their arms, their

Digitized by Google

feathered fingers thrilling with an emotion that shook my nerves as well: heads and bodies followed like a field of grain before a gust. My blood came hot and cold, tears pricked my eyes, my head whirled, I felt an almost irresistible impulse to join the dancers. One drama, I think, I very nearly understood. A fierce and savage old man took the solo part. He sang of the birth of a prince, and how he was tenderly rocked in his mother's arms; of his boyhood, when he excelled his fellows in swimming, climbing, and all athletic sports; of his youth, when he went out to sea with his boat and fished; of his manhood, when he married a wife who cradled a son of his own in her arms. Then came the alarm of war, and a great battle, of which for a time the issue was doubtful; but the hero conquered, as he always does, and with a tremendous burst of the victors the piece closed. There were also comic pieces, which caused great amusement. During one, an old man behind me clutched me by the arm, shook his finger in my face with a roguish smile, and said something with a chuckle, which I took to be the equivalent of 'O, you women, you women; it is true of you all!' I fear it was not complimentary. At no time was there the least sign of the ugly indecency of the eastern islands. All was poetry pure and simple. The music itself was as complex as our own, though constructed on an entirely different basis; once or twice I was startled

Digitized by Google

by a bit of something very like the best English sacred music, but it was only for an instant. At last there was a longer pause, and this time the dancers were all on their feet. As the drama went on the interest grew. The performers appealed to each other, to the audience, to the heaven above; they took counsel with each other, the conspirators drew together in a knot; it was just an opera, the drums coming in at proper intervals, the tenor, baritone, and bass all where they should be—except that the voices were all of the same calibre. A woman once sang from the back row with a very fine contralto voice spoilt by being made artificially nasal; I notice all the women affect that unpleasantness. At one time a boy of angelic beauty was the soloist; and at another, a child of six or eight, doubtless an infant phenomenon being trained, was placed in the centre. The little fellow was desperately frightened and embarrassed at first, but towards the close warmed up to his work and showed much dramatic talent. The changing expressions on the faces of the dancers were so speaking, that it seemed a great stupidity not to understand them."

Our neighbour at this performance, Karaiti, somewhat favours his Butaritarian majesty in shape and feature, being like him portly, bearded, and Oriental. In character he seems the reverse: alert, smiling, jovial, jocular, industrious. At home in his own island, he labours himself

Digitized by Google

like a slave, and makes his people labour like a slave-driver. He takes an interest in ideas. George the trader told him about flying-machines. "Is that true, George?" he asked. "It is in the papers," replied George. "Well," said Karaiti, "if that man can do it with machinery, I can do it without"; and he designed and made a pair of wings, strapped them on his shoulders, went to the end of a pier, launched himself into space, and fell bulkily into the sea. His wives fished him out, for his wings hindered him in swimming. "George," said he, pausing as he went up to change, "George, you lie." He had eight wives, for his small realm still follows ancient customs; but he showed embarrassment when this was mentioned to my wife. "Tell her I have only brought one here," he said anxiously. Altogether the Black Douglas pleased us much; and as we heard fresh details of the king's uneasiness, and saw for ourselves that all the weapons in the summer parlour had been hid, we watched with the more admiration the cause of all this anxiety rolling on his big legs, with his big smiling face, apparently unarmed, and certainly unattended, through the hostile town. The Red Douglas, pot-bellied Kuma, having perhaps heard word of the debauch, remained upon his fief; his vassals thus came uncommanded to the feast, and swelled the following of Karaiti.

Friday, July 26.—At night in the dark, the

Digitized by Google

singers of Makin paraded in the road before our house and sang the song of the princess. "This is the day; she was born to-day; Nei Kamaunava was born to-day—a beautiful princess, Queen of Butaritari." So I was told it went in endless iteration. The song was of course out of season, and the performance only a rehearsal. But it was a serenade besides; a delicate attention to ourselves from our new friend, Karaiti.

Saturday, July 27.—We had announced a performance of the magic lantern to-night in church; and this brought the king to visit us. In honour of the Black Douglas (I suppose) his usual two guardsmen were now increased to four; and the squad made an outlandish figure as they straggled after him, in straw hats, kilts, and jackets. Three carried their arms reversed, the butts over their shoulders, the muzzles menacing the king's plump back; the fourth had passed his weapon behind his neck, and held it there with arms extended like a backboard. The visit was extraordinarily long. The king, no longer galvanised with gin, said and did nothing. He sat collapsed in a chair and let a cigar go out. It was hot, it was sleepy, it was cruel dull; there was no resource but to spy in the countenance of Tebureimoa for some remaining trait of *Mr. Corpse* the butcher. His hawk nose, crudely depressed and flattened at the point, did truly seem to us to smell of midnight murder. When he took his leave, Maka bade me observe him

Digitized by Google

going down the stair (or rather ladder) from the verandah. "Old man," said Maka. "Yes," said I, "and yet I suppose not old man." "Young man," returned Maka, "perhaps fo'ty." And I have heard since he is most likely younger.

While the magic lantern was showing, I skulked without in the dark. The voice of Maka, excitedly explaining the Scripture slides, seemed to fill not the church only, but the neighbourhood. All else was silent. Presently a distant sound of singing arose and approached; and a procession drew near along the road, the hot clean smell of the men and women striking in my face delightfully. At the corner, arrested by the voice of Maka and the lightening and darkening of the church, they paused. They had no mind to go nearer, that was plain. They were Makin people, I believe, probably staunch heathens, contemners of the missionary and his works. Of a sudden, however, a man broke from their company, took to his heels, and fled into the church; next moment three had followed him; the next it was a covey of near upon a score, all pelting for their lives. So the little band of the heathen paused irresolute at the corner, and melted before the attractions of a magic lantern, like a glacier in spring. The more staunch vainly taunted the deserters; three fled in a guilty silence, but still fled; and when at length the leader found the wit or the authority to get his troop in motion and revive the singing,

Digitized by Google

it was with much diminished forces that they passed musically on up the dark road.

Meanwhile inside the luminous pictures brightened and faded. I stood for some while unobserved in the rear of the spectators, when I could hear just in front of me a pair of lovers following the show with interest, the male playing the part of interpreter and (like Adam) mingling caresses with his lecture. The wild animals, a tiger in particular, and that old school-treat favourite, the sleeper and the mouse, were hailed with joy; but the chief marvel and delight was in the gospel series. Maka, in the opinion of his aggrieved wife, did not properly rise to the occasion. "What is the matter with the man? Why can't he talk?" she cried. The matter with the man, I think, was the greatness of the opportunity; he reeled under his good fortune; and whether he did ill or well, the exposure of these pious "phantoms" did as a matter of fact silence in all that part of the island the voice of the scoffer. "Why then," the word went round, "why then, the Bible is true!" And on our return afterwards we were told the impression was yet lively, and those who had seen might be heard telling those who had not, "O yes, it is all true; these things all happened, we have seen the pictures." The argument is not so childish as it seems; for I doubt if these islanders are acquainted with any other mode of representation but photography; so that the picture of an event

Digitized by Google

(on the old melodrama principle that "the camera cannot lie, Joseph,") would appear strong proof of its occurrence. The fact amused us the more because our slides were some of them ludicrously silly, and one (Christ before Pilate) was received with shouts of merriment, in which even Maka was constrained to join.

Sunday, July 28.—Karaiti came to ask for a repetition of the "phantoms"—this was the accepted word—and, having received a promise, turned and left my humble roof without the shadow of a salutation. I felt it impolitic to have the least appearance of pocketing a slight; the times have been too difficult, and were still too doubtful; and Queen Victoria's son was bound to maintain the honour of his house. Karaiti was accordingly summoned that evening to the Ricks, where Mrs. Rick fell foul of him in words, and Queen Victoria's son assailed him with indignant looks. I was the ass with the lion's skin; I could not roar in the language of the Gilbert Islands; but I could stare. Karaiti declared he had meant no offence; apologised in a sound, hearty, gentlemanly manner; and became at once at his ease. He had in a dagger to examine, and announced he would come to price it on the morrow, to-day being Sunday; this nicety in a heathen with eight wives surprised me. The dagger was "good for killing fish," he said roguishly; and was supposed to have his eye upon fish upon two legs. It is at

Digitized by Google

least odd that in Eastern Polynesia fish was the accepted euphemism for the human sacrifice. Asked as to the population of his island, Karaiti called out to his vassals who sat waiting him outside the door, and they put it at four hundred and fifty; but (added Karaiti jovially) there will soon be plenty more, for all the women are in the family way. Long before we separated I had quite forgotten his offence. He, however, still bore it in mind; and with a very courteous inspiration returned early on the next day, paid us a long visit, and punctiliously said farewell when he departed.

Monday, July 29.—The great day came round at last. In the first hours the night was startled by the sound of clapping hands and the chant of Nei Kamaunava; its melancholy, slow, and somewhat menacing measures broken at intervals by a formidable shout. The little morsel of humanity thus celebrated in the dark hours was observed at midday playing on the green entirely naked, and equally unobserved and unconcerned.

The summer parlour on its artificial islet, relieved against the shimmering lagoon, and shimmering itself with sun and tinned iron, was all day crowded about by eager men and women. Within, it was boxed full of islanders, of any age and size, and in every degree of nudity and finery. So close we squatted, that at one time I had a mighty handsome woman on my knees,

Digitized by Google

two little naked urchins having their feet against my back. There might be a dame in full attire of *holoku* and hat and flowers; and her next neighbour might the next moment strip some little rag of a shift from her fat shoulders and come out a monument of flesh, painted rather than covered by the hairbreadth *ridi*. Little ladies who thought themselves too great to appear undraped upon so high a festival were seen to pause outside in the broad sunshine, their miniature ridis in their hand; a moment more and they were full-dressed and entered the concert-room.

At either end stood up to sing, or sat down to rest, the alternate companies of singers; Kuma and Little Makin on the north, Butaritari and its conjunct hamlets to the south; both groups conspicuous in barbaric bravery. In the midst, between these rival camps of troubadours, a bench was placed; and here the king and queen throned it, some two or three feet above the crowded audience on the floor—Tebureimoa as usual in his striped pyjamas with a satchel strapped across one shoulder, doubtless (in the island fashion) to contain his pistols; the queen in a purple *holoku*, her abundant hair let down, a fan in her hand. The bench was turned facing to the strangers, a piece of well-considered civility; and when it was the turn of Butaritari to sing, the pair must twist round on the bench, lean their elbows on the rail, and turn to us the specta-

Digitized by Google

cle of their broad backs. The royal couple occasionally solaced themselves with a clay pipe; and the pomp of state was further heightened by the rifles of a picket of the guard.

With this kingly countenance, and ourselves squatted on the ground, we heard several songs from one side or the other. Then royalty and its guards withdrew, and Queen Victoria's son and daughter-in-law were summoned by acclamation to the vacant throne. Our pride was perhaps a little modified when we were joined on our high places by a certain thriftless loafer of a white; and yet I was glad too, for the man had a smattering of native, and could give me some idea of the subject of the songs. One was patriotic, and dared Tembinok' of Apemama, the terror of the group, to an invasion. One mixed the planting of taro and the harvest-home. Some were historical, and commemorated kings and the illustrious chances of their time, such as a bout of drinking or a war. One, at least, was a drama of domestic interest, excellently played by the troop from Makin. It told the story of a man who has lost his wife, at first bewails her loss, then seeks another: the earlier strains (or acts) are played exclusively by men; but towards the end a woman appears, who has just lost her husband; and I suppose the pair console each other, for the finale seemed of happy omen. Of some of the songs my informant told me briefly they were "like about the

Digitized by Google

weemen"; this I could have guessed myself. Each side (I should have said) was strengthened by one or two women. They were all soloists, did not very often join in the performance, but stood disengaged at the back part of the stage, and looked (in *ridi*, necklace, and dressed hair) for all the world like European ballet-dancers. When the song was anyway broad these ladies came particularly to the front; and it was singular to see that, after each entry, the *première danseuse* pretended to be overcome by shame, as though led on beyond what she had meant, and her male assistants made a feint of driving her away like one who had disgraced herself. Similar affectations accompany certain truly obscene dances of Samoa, where they are very well in place. Here it was different. The words, perhaps, in this free-spoken world, were gross enough to make a carter blush; and the most suggestive feature was this feint of shame. For such parts the women showed some disposition; they were pert, they were neat, they were acrobatic, they were at times really amusing, and some of them were pretty. But this is not the artist's field; there is the whole width of heaven between such capering and ogling, and the strange rhythmic gestures, and strange, rapturous, frenzied faces with which the best of the male dancers held us spellbound through a Gilbert Island ballet.

Almost from the first it was apparent that the

Digitized by Google

people of the city were defeated. I might have thought them even good, only I had the other troop before my eyes to correct my standard, and remind me continually of "the little more, and how much it is." Perceiving themselves worsted, the choir of Butaritari grew confused, blundered, and broke down; amid this hubbub of unfamiliar intervals I should not myself have recognised the slip, but the audience were quick to catch it, and to jeer. To crown all, the Makin company began a dance of truly superlative merit. I know not what it was about, I was too much absorbed to ask. In one act a part of the chorus, squealing in some strange falsetto, produced very much the effect of our orchestra; in another, the dancers, leaping like jumping-jacks, with arms extended, passed through and through each other's ranks with extraordinary speed, neatness, and humour. A more laughable effect I never saw; in any European theatre it would have brought the house down, and the island audience roared with laughter and applause. This filled up the measure for the rival company, and they forgot themselves and decency. After each act or figure of the ballet, the performers pause a moment standing, and the next is introduced by the clapping of hands in triplets. Not until the end of the whole ballet do they sit down, which is the signal for the rivals to stand up. But now all rules were to be broken. During the interval following on this great ap-

Digitized by Google

plause, the company of Butaritari leaped suddenly to their feet and most unhandsomely began a performance of their own. It was strange to see the men of Makin staring; I have seen a tenor in Europe stare with the same blank dignity into a hissing theatre; but presently, to my surprise, they sobered down, gave up the unsung remainder of their ballet, resumed their seats, and suffered their ungallant adversaries to go on and finish. Nothing would suffice. Again, at the first interval, Butaritari unhandsomely cut in; Makin, irritated in turn, followed the example; and the two companies of dancers remained permanently standing, continuously clapping hands, and regularly cutting across each other at each pause. I expected blows to begin with any moment; and our position in the midst was highly unstrategical. But the Makin people had a better thought; and upon a fresh interruption turned and trooped out of the house. We followed them, first because these were the artists, second because they were guests and had been scurvily ill-used. A large population of our neighbours did the same, so that the causeway was filled from end to end by the procession of deserters; and the Butaritari choir was left to sing for its own pleasure in an empty house, having gained the point and lost the audience. It was surely fortunate that there was no one drunk; but, drunk or sober, where else would a scene so irritating have concluded without blows?

Digitized by Google

The last stage and glory of this auspicious day was of our own providing—the second and positively the last appearance of the phantoms. All round the church, groups sat outside, in the night, where they could see nothing; perhaps ashamed to enter, certainly finding some shadowy pleasure in the mere proximity. Within, about one-half of the great shed was densely packed with people. In the midst, on the royal dais, the lantern luminously smoked; chance rays of light struck out the earnest countenance of our Chinaman grinding the hand-organ; a fainter glimmer showed off the rafters and their shadows in the hollow of the roof; the pictures shone and vanished on the screen; and as each appeared, there would run a hush, a whisper, a strong shuddering rustle, and a chorus of small cries among the crowd. There sat by me the mate of a wrecked schooner. "They would think this a strange sight in Europe or the States," said he, "going on in a building like this, all tied with bits of string."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

HUSBAND AND WIFE

THE trader accustomed to the manners of Eastern Polynesia has a lesson to learn among the Gilberts. The *ridi* is but a spare attire; as late as thirty years back the women went naked until marriage; within ten years the custom lingered; and these facts, above all when heard in description, conveyed a very false idea of the manners of the group. A very intelligent missionary described it (in its former state) as a "Paradise of naked women" for the resident whites. It was at least a platonic Paradise, where Lothario ventured at his peril. Since 1860, fourteen whites have perished on a single island, all for the same cause, all found where they had no business, and speared by some indignant father of a family; the figure was given me by one of their contemporaries who had been more prudent and survived. The strange persistence of these fourteen martyrs might seem to point to monomania or a series of romantic passions; gin is the more likely key. The poor buzzards sat alone in their houses by an open case;

Digitized by Google

they drank; their brain was fired; they stumbled towards the nearest houses on chance; and the dart went through their liver. In place of a Paradise the trader found an archipelago of fierce husbands and of virtuous women. "Of course if you wish to make love to them, it's the same as anywhere else," observed a trader innocently; but he and his companions rarely so choose.

The trader must be credited with a virtue: he often makes a kind and loyal husband. Some of the worst beachcombers in the Pacific, some of the last of the old school, have fallen in my path, and some of them were admirable to their native wives, and one made a despairing widower. The position of a trader's wife in the Gilberts is, besides, unusually enviable. She shares the immunities of her husband. Curfew in Butaritari sounds for her in vain. Long after the bell is rung and the great island ladies are confined for the night to their own roof, this chartered libertine may scamper and giggle through the deserted streets or go down to bathe in the dark. The resources of the store are at her hand; she goes arrayed like a queen, and feasts delicately every day upon tinned meats. And she who was perhaps of no regard or station among natives sits with captains, and is entertained on board of schooners. Five of these privileged dames were some time our neighbours. Four were handsome skittish lasses, gamesome like children, and like children liable to fits of

Digitized by Google

pouting. They wore dresses by day, but there was a tendency after dark to strip these lendings and to career and squall about the compound in the aboriginal *ridi*. Games of cards were continually played, with shells for counters; their course was much marred by cheating; and the end of a round (above all if a man was of the party) resolved itself into a scrimmage for the counters. The fifth was a matron. It was a picture to see her sail to church on a Sunday, a parasol in hand, a nursemaid following, and the baby buried in a trade hat and armed with a patent feeding-bottle. The service was enlivened by her continual supervision and correction of the maid. It was impossible not to fancy that the baby was a doll, and the church some European playroom. All these women were legitimately married. It is true that the certificate of one, when she proudly showed it, proved to run thus, that she was "married for one night," and her gracious partner was at liberty to "send her to hell" the next morning; but she was none the wiser or the worse for the dastardly trick. Another, I heard, was married on a work of mine in a pirated edition; it answered the purpose as well as a Hall Bible. Notwithstanding all these allurements of social distinction, rare food and raiment, a comparative vacation from toil, a legitimate marriage contracted on a pirated edition, the trader must sometimes seek long before he can be mated.

Digitized by Google

While I was in the group one had been eight months on the quest, and he was still a bachelor.

Within strictly native society the old laws and practices were harsh, but not without a certain stamp of high-mindedness. Stealthy adultery was punished with death; open elopement was properly considered virtue in comparison, and compounded for a fine in land. The male adulterer alone seems to have been punished. It is correct manners for a jealous man to hang himself; a jealous woman has a different remedy—she bites her rival. Ten or twenty years ago it was a capital offence to raise a woman's *ridi;* to this day it is still punished with a heavy fine; and the garment itself is still symbolically sacred. Suppose a piece of land to be disputed in Butaritari, the claimant who shall first hang a *ridi* on the tapu-post has gained his cause, since no one can remove or touch it but himself.

The *ridi* was the badge not of the woman but the wife, the mark not of her sex but of her station. It was the collar on the slave's neck, the brand on merchandise. The adulterous woman seems to have been spared; were the husband offended, it would be a poor consolation to send his draught cattle to the shambles. Karaiti, to this day, calls his eight wives "his horses," some trader having explained to him the employment of these animals on farms; and Nanteitei hired out his wives to do mason-work. Husbands, at least when of high rank, had the

Digitized by Google

power of life and death; even whites seem to have possessed it; and their wives, when they had transgressed beyond forgiveness, made haste to pronounce the formula of deprecation—*I Kana Kim.* This form of words had so much virtue that a condemned criminal, repeating it on a particular day to the king who had condemned him, must be instantly released. It is an offer of abasement, and, strangely enough, the reverse—the imitation—is a common vulgar insult in Great Britain to this day. I give a scene between a trader and his Gilbert Island wife, as it was told me by the husband, now one of the oldest residents, but then a freshman in the group.

"Go and light a fire," said the trader, "and when I have brought this oil I will cook some fish."

The woman grunted at him, island fashion.

"I am not a pig that you should grunt at me," said he.

"I know you are not a pig," said the woman, "neither am I your slave."

"To be sure you are not my slave, and if you do not care to stop with me, you had better go home to your people," said he. "But in the meantime go and light the fire; and when I have brought this oil I will cook some fish."

She went as if to obey; and presently when the trader looked she had built a fire so big that the cook-house was catching in flames.

Digitized by Google

"*I Kana Kim!*" she cried, as she saw him coming; but he recked not, and hit her with a cooking-pot. The leg pierced her skull, blood spouted, it was thought she was a dead woman, and the natives surrounded the house in a menacing expectation. Another white was present, a man of older experience. "You will have us both killed if you go on like this," he cried. "She had said *I Kana Kim!*" If she had not said *I Kana Kim* he might have struck her with a caldron. It was not the blow that made the crime, but the disregard of an accepted formula.

Polygamy, the particular sacredness of wives, their semi-servile state, their seclusion in kings' harems, even their privilege of biting, all would seem to indicate a Mohammedan society and the opinion of the soullessness of woman. And not so in the least. It is a mere appearance. After you have studied these extremes in one house, you may go to the next and find all reversed, the woman the mistress, the man only the first of her thralls. The authority is not with the husband as such, nor the wife as such. It resides in the chief or the chief-woman; in him or her who has inherited the lands of the clan, and stands to the clansmen in the place of parent, exacting their service, answerable for their fines. There is but the one source of power and the one ground of dignity—rank. The king married a chief-woman; she became his menial,

Digitized by Google

and must work with her hands on Messrs. Wightman's pier. The king divorced her; she regained at once her former state and power. She married the Hawaiian sailor, and behold the man is her flunkey and can be shown the door at pleasure. Nay, and such low-born lords are even corrected physically, and, like grown but dutiful children, must endure the discipline.

We were intimate in one such household, that of Nei Takauti and Nan Tok'; I put the lady first of necessity. During one week of fool's paradise, Mrs. Stevenson had gone alone to the sea-side of the island after shells. I am very sure the proceeding was unsafe; and she soon perceived a man and woman watching her. Do what she would, her guardians held her steadily in view; and when the afternoon began to fall, and they thought she had stayed long enough, took her in charge, and by signs and broken English ordered her home. On the way the lady drew from her earring-hole a clay pipe, the husband lighted it, and it was handed to my unfortunate wife, who knew not how to refuse the incommodious favour; and when they were all come to our house, the pair sat down beside her on the floor, and improved the occasion with prayer. From that day they were our family friends; bringing thrice a day the beautiful island garlands of white flowers, visiting us any evening, and frequently carrying us down to their own maniap' in return, the woman leading

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Stevenson by the hand like one child with another.

Nan Tok', the husband, was young, extremely handsome, of the most approved good humour, and suffering in his precarious station from suppressed high spirits. Nei Takauti, the wife, was getting old; her grown son by a former marriage had just hanged himself before his mother's eyes in despair at a well-merited rebuke. Perhaps she had never been beautiful, but her face was full of character, her eye of sombre fire. She was a high chief-woman, but by a strange exception for a person of her rank, was small, spare, and sinewy, with lean small hands and corded neck. Her full dress of an evening was invariably a white chemise—and for adornment, green leaves (or sometimes white blossoms) stuck in her hair and thrust through her huge earring-holes. The husband on the contrary changed to view like a kaleidoscope. Whatever pretty thing my wife might have given to Nei Takauti—a string of beads, a ribbon, a piece of bright fabric—appeared the next evening on the person of Nan Tok'. It was plain he was a clothes-horse; that he wore livery; that, in a word, he was his wife's wife. They reversed the parts indeed, down to the least particular; it was the husband who showed himself the ministering angel in the hour of pain, while the wife displayed the apathy and heartlessness of the proverbial man.

Digitized by Google

When Nei Takauti had a headache Nan Tok' was full of attention and concern. When the husband had a cold and a racking toothache the wife heeded not, except to jeer. It is always the woman's part to fill and light the pipe; Nei Takauti handed hers in silence to the wedded page; but she carried it herself, as though the page were not entirely trusted. Thus she kept the money, but it was he who ran the errands, anxiously sedulous. A cloud on her face dimmed instantly his beaming looks; on an early visit to their maniap' my wife saw he had cause to be wary. Nan Tok' had a friend with him, a giddy young thing, of his own age and sex; and they had worked themselves into that stage of jocularity when consequences are too often disregarded. Nei Takauti mentioned her own name. Instantly Nan Tok' held up two fingers, his friend did likewise, both in an ecstasy of slyness. It was plain the lady had two names; and from the nature of their merriment and the wrath that gathered on her brow, there must be something ticklish in the second. The husband pronounced it; a well-directed cocoa-nut from the hand of his wife caught him on the side of the head, and the voices and the mirth of these indiscreet young gentlemen ceased for the day.

The people of Eastern Polynesia are never at a loss; their etiquette is absolute and plenary; in every circumstance it tells them what to do and how to do it. The Gilbertines are seeming-

Digitized by Google

ly more free, and pay for their freedom (like ourselves) in frequent perplexity. This was often the case with the topsy-turvy couple. We had once supplied them during a visit with a pipe and tobacco; and when they had smoked and were about to leave, they found themselves confronted with a problem: should they take or leave what remained of the tobacco. The piece of plug was taken up, it was laid down again, it was handed back and forth, and argued over, till the wife began to look haggard and the husband elderly. They ended by taking it, and I wager were not yet clear of the compound before they were sure they had decided wrong. Another time they had been given each a liberal cup of coffee, and Nan Tok' with difficulty and disaffection made an end of his. Nei Takauti had taken some, she had no mind for more, plainly conceived it would be a breach of manners to set down the cup unfinished, and ordered her wedded retainer to dispose of what was left. "I have swallowed all I can, I cannot swallow more, it is a physical impossibility," he seemed to say; and his stern officer reiterated her commands with secret imperative signals. Luckless dog! but in mere humanity we came to the rescue and removed the cup.

I cannot but smile over this funny household; yet I remember the good souls with affection and respect. Their attention to ourselves was surprising. The garlands are much esteemed,

Digitized by Google

the blossoms must be sought far and wide; and though they had many retainers to call to their aid, we often saw themselves passing afield after the blossoms, and the wife engaged with her own hands in putting them together. It was no want of heart, only that disregard so incident to husbands, that made Nei Takauti despise the sufferings of Nan Tok'. When my wife was unwell she proved a diligent and kindly nurse; and the pair, to the extreme embarrassment of the sufferer, became fixtures in the sick-room. This rugged, capable, imperious old dame, with the wild eyes, had deep and tender qualities: her pride in her young husband it seemed that she dissembled, fearing possibly to spoil him; and when she spoke of her dead son there came something tragic in her face. But I seemed to trace in the Gilbertines a virility of sense and sentiment which distinguishes them (like their harsh and uncouth language) from their brother islanders in the east.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PART IV

THE GILBERTS—APEMAMA

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE ROYAL TRADER

THERE is one great personage in the Gilberts: Tembinok' of Apemama: solely conspicuous, the hero of song, the butt of gossip. Through the rest of the group the kings are slain or fallen in tutelage: Tembinok' alone remains, the last tyrant, the last erect vestige of a dead society. The white man is everywhere else, building his houses, drinking his gin, getting in and out of trouble with the weak native governments. There is only one white on Apemama, and he on sufferance, living far from court, and hearkening and watching his conduct like a mouse in a cat's ear. Through all the other islands a stream of native visitors comes and goes, travelling by families, spending years on the grand tour. Apemama alone is left upon one side, the tourist dreading to risk himself within the clutch of Tembinok'. And fear of the same Gorgon follows and troubles them at home. Maiana once paid him tribute; he once fell upon and seized Nonuti: first steps to the

Digitized by Google

empire of the archipelago. A British warship coming on the scene, the conqueror was driven to disgorge, his career checked in the outset, his dear-bought armoury sunk in his own lagoon. But the impression had been made; periodical fear of him still shakes the islands: rumour depicts him mustering his canoes for a fresh onfall; rumour can name his destination; and Tembinok' figures in the patriotic war-songs of the Gilberts like Napoleon in those of our grandfathers.

We were at sea, bound from Mariki to Nonuti and Tapituea, when the wind came suddenly fair for Apemama. The course was at once changed; all hands were turned-to to clean ship, the decks holystoned, the cabin washed, the trade-room overhauled. In all our cruising we never saw the *Equator* so smart as she was made for Tembinok'. Nor was Captain Reid alone in these coquetries; for, another schooner chancing to arrive during my stay in Apemama, I found that she also was dandified for the occasion. And the two cases stand alone in my experience of South Sea traders.

We had on board a family of native tourists, from the grandsire to the babe in arms, trying (against an extraordinary series of ill-luck) to regain their native island of Peru.[1] Five times already they had paid their fare and taken ship; five times they had been disappointed, dropped

[1] In the Gilbert group.

Digitized by Google

penniless upon strange islands, or carried back to Butaritari, whence they sailed. This last attempt had been no better starred; their provisions were exhausted. Peru was beyond hope, and they had cheerfully made up their minds to a fresh stage of exile in Tapituea or Nonuti. With this slant of wind their random destination became once more changed; and like the Calender's pilot, when the "black mountains" hove in view, they changed colour and beat upon their breasts. Their camp, which was on deck in the ship's waist, resounded with complaint. They would be set to work, they must become slaves, escape was hopeless, they must live and toil and die in Apemama, in the tyrant's den. With this sort of talk they so greatly terrified their children, that one (a big hulking boy) must at last be torn screaming from the schooner's side. And their fears were wholly groundless. I have little doubt they were not suffered to be idle; but I can vouch for it that they were kindly and generously used. For, the matter of a year later, I was once more shipmate with these inconsistent wanderers on board the *Janet Nicoll*. Their fare was paid by Tembinok'; they who had gone ashore from the *Equator* destitute, reappeared upon the *Janet* with new clothes, laden with mats and presents, and bringing with them a magazine of food, on which they lived like fighting cocks throughout the voyage; I saw them at length repatriated, and I must say they showed

Digitized by Google

more concern on quitting Apemama than delight at reaching home.

We entered by the north passage (Sunday, September 1st), dodging among shoals. It was a day of fierce equatorial sunshine; but the breeze was strong and chill; and the mate, who conned the schooner from the cross-trees, returned shivering to the deck. The lagoon was thick with many-tinted wavelets; a continuous roaring of the outer sea overhung the anchorage; and the long, hollow crescent of palm ruffled and sparkled in the wind. Opposite our berth the beach was seen to be surmounted for some distance by a terrace of white coral, seven or eight feet high and crowned in turn by the scattered and incongruous buildings of the palace. The village adjoins on the south, a cluster of high-roofed maniap's. And village and palace seemed deserted.

We were scarce yet moored, however, before distant and busy figures appeared upon the beach, a boat was launched, and a crew pulled out to us bringing the king's ladder. Tembinok' had once an accident; has feared ever since to intrust his person to the rotten chandlery of South Sea traders; and devised in consequence a frame of wood, which is brought on board a ship as soon as she appears, and remains lashed to her side until she leave. The boat's crew, having applied this engine, returned at once to shore. They might not come on board; neither might

Digitized by Google

we land, or not without danger of offence; the king giving pratique in person. An interval followed, during which dinner was delayed for the great man; the prelude of the ladder, giving us some notion of his weighty body and sensible, ingenious character, had highly whetted our curiosity; and it was with something like excitement that we saw the beach and terrace suddenly blacken with attendant vassals, the king and party embark, the boat (a man-of-war gig) come flying towards us dead before the wind, and the royal coxswain lay us cleverly aboard, mount the ladder with a jealous diffidence, and descend heavily on deck.

Not long ago he was overgrown with fat, obscured to view, and a burthen to himself. Captains visiting the island advised him to walk; and though it broke the habits of a life and the traditions of his rank, he practised the remedy with benefit. His corpulence is now portable; you would call him lusty rather than fat; but his gait is still dull, stumbling, and elephantine. He neither stops nor hastens, but goes about his business with an implacable deliberation. We could never see him and not be struck with his extraordinary natural means for the theatre: a beaked profile like Dante's in the mask, a mane of long black hair, the eye brilliant, imperious, and inquiring: for certain parts, and to one who could have used it, the face was a fortune. His voice matched it well, being shrill, powerful, and

Digitized by Google

uncanny, with a note like a sea-bird's. Where there are no fashions, none to set them, few to follow them if they were set, and none to criticise, he dresses—as Sir Charles Grandison lived—"to his own heart." Now he wears a woman's frock, now a naval uniform; now (and more usually) figures in a masquerade costume of his own design: trousers and a singular jacket with shirt tails, the cut and fit wonderful for island workmanship, the material always handsome, sometimes green velvet, sometimes cardinal red silk. This masquerade becomes him admirably. In the woman's frock he looks ominous and weird beyond belief. I see him now come pacing towards me in the cruel sun, solitary, a figure out of Hoffmann.

A visit on board ship, such as that at which we now assisted, makes a chief part and by far the chief diversion of the life of Tembinok'. He is not only the sole ruler, he is the sole merchant of his triple kingdom, Apemama, Aranuka, and Kuria, well-planted islands. The taro goes to the chiefs, who divide as they please among their immediate adherents; but certain fish, turtles—which abound in Kuria,—and the whole produce of the coco-palm, belong exclusively to Tembinok'. "A' cobra[1] berong me," observed his majesty with a wave of his hand; and he counts and sells it by the houseful. "You got copra,

[1] Copra: the dried kernel of the cocoa-nut, the chief article of commerce throughout the Pacific Islands.

Digitized by Google

king?" I have heard a trader ask. "I got two, three outches,"[1] his majesty replied: "I think three." Hence the commercial importance of Apemama, the trade of three islands being centred there in a single hand; hence it is that so many whites have tried in vain to gain or to preserve a footing; hence ships are adorned, cooks have special orders, and captains array themselves in smiles, to greet the king. If he be pleased with his welcome and the fare he may pass days on board, and every day, and sometimes every hour, will be of profit to the ship. He oscillates between the cabin, where he is entertained with strange meats, and the trade-room, where he enjoys the pleasures of shopping on a scale to match his person. A few obsequious attendants squat by the house door, awaiting his least signal. In the boat, which has been suffered to drop astern, one or two of his wives lie covered from the sun under mats, tossed by the short sea of the lagoon, and enduring agonies of heat and tedium. This severity is now and then relaxed and the wives allowed on board. Three or four were thus favoured on the day of our arrival: substantial ladies airily attired in *ridis*. Each had a share of copra, her *peculium*, to dispose of for herself. The display in the trade-room—hats, ribbons, dresses, scents, tins of salmon—the pride of the eye and the lust of the flesh—tempted them in vain. They had

[1] Houses.

Digitized by Google

but the one idea—tobacco, the island currency, tantamount to minted gold; returned to shore with it, burthened but rejoicing; and late into the night, on the royal terrace, were to be seen counting the sticks by lamplight in the open air.

The king is no such economist. He is greedy of things new and foreign. House after house, chest after chest, in the palace precinct, is already crammed with clocks, musical boxes, blue spectacles, umbrellas, knitted waistcoats, bolts of stuff, tools, rifles, fowling-pieces, medicines, European foods, sewing-machines, and, what is more extraordinary, stoves: all that ever caught his eye, tickled his appetite, pleased him for its use, or puzzled him with its apparent inutility. And still his lust is unabated. He is possessed by the seven devils of the collector. He hears a thing spoken of, and a shadow comes on his face. "I think I no got him," he will say; and the treasures he has seem worthless in comparison. If a ship be bound for Apemama, the merchant racks his brain to hit upon some novelty. This he leaves carelessly in the main cabin or partly conceals in his own berth, so that the king shall spy it for himself. "How much you want?" inquires Tembinok', passing and pointing. "No, king; that too dear," returns the trader. "I think I like him," says the king. This was a bowl of gold-fish. On another occasion it was scented soap. "No, king; that cost too much," said the trader; "too good for a

Digitized by Google

Kanaka." "How much you got? I take him all," replied his majesty, and became the lord of seventeen boxes at two dollars a cake. Or again, the merchant feigns the article is not for sale, is private property, an heirloom or a gift; and the trick infallibly succeeds. Thwart the king and you hold him. His autocratic nature rears at the affront of opposition. He accepts it for a challenge; sets his teeth like a hunter going at a fence; and with no mark of emotion, scarce even of interest, stolidly piles up the price. Thus, for our sins, he took a fancy to my wife's dressing-bag, a thing entirely useless to the man, and sadly battered by years of service. Early one forenoon he came to our house, sat down, and abruptly offered to purchase it. I told him I sold nothing, and the bag at any rate was a present from a friend; but he was acquainted with these pretexts from of old, and knew what they were worth and how to meet them. Adopting what I believe is called "the object method," he drew out a bag of English gold, sovereigns and half-sovereigns, and began to lay them one by one in silence on the table; at each fresh piece reading our faces with a look. In vain I continued to protest I was no trader; he deigned not to reply. There must have been twenty pounds on the table, he was still going on, and irritation had begun to mingle with our embarrassment, when a happy idea came to our delivery. Since his majesty thought so much of the bag, we said,

Digitized by Google

we must beg him to accept it as a present. It was the most surprising turn in Tembinok's experience. He perceived too late that his persistence was unmannerly; hung his head a while in silence: then, lifting up a sheepish countenance, "I 'shamed," said the tyrant. It was the first and the last time we heard him own to a flaw in his behaviour. Half an hour after he sent us a camphor-wood chest, worth only a few dollars—but then heaven knows what Tembinok' had paid for it.

Cunning by nature, and versed for forty years in the government of men, it must not be supposed that he is cheated blindly, or has resigned himself without resistance to be the milch-cow of the passing trader. His efforts have been even heroic. Like Nakaeia of Makin, he has owned schooners. More fortunate than Nakaeia, he has found captains. Ships of his have sailed as far as to the colonies. He has trafficked direct, in his own bottoms, with New Zealand. And even so, even there, the world-enveloping dishonesty of the white man prevented him; his profit melted, his ship returned in debt, the money for the insurance was embezzled, and when the *Coronet* came to be lost, he was astonished to find he had lost all. At this he dropped his weapons; owned he might as hopefully wrestle with the winds of heaven; and like an experienced sheep, submitted his fleece thenceforward to the shearers. He is the last man in the world to

Digitized by Google

waste anger on the incurable; accepts it with cynical composure; asks no more in those he deals with than a certain decency of moderation: drives as good a bargain as he can; and when he considers he is more than usually swindled, writes it in his memory against the merchant's name. He once ran over to me a list of captains and supercargoes with whom he had done business, classing them under three heads: "He cheat a litty"—"He cheat plenty"—and "I think he cheat too much." For the first two classes he expressed perfect toleration; sometimes, but not always, for the third. I was present when a certain merchant was turned about his business, and was the means (having a considerable influence ever since the bag) of patching up the dispute. Even on the day of our arrival there was like to have been a hitch with Captain Reid: the ground of which is perhaps worth recital. Among goods exported specially for Tembinok' there is a beverage known (and labelled) as Hennessy's brandy. It is neither Hennessy, nor even brandy; is about the colour of sherry, but is not sherry; tastes of kirsch, and yet neither is it kirsch. The king, at least, has grown used to this amazing brand, and rather prides himself upon the taste; and any substitution is a double offence, being at once to cheat him and to cast a doubt upon his palate. A similar weakness is to be observed in all connoisseurs. Now, the last case sold by the *Equator* was found to con-

Digitized by Google

tain a different and I would fondly fancy a superior distillation; and the conversation opened very black for Captain Reid. But Tembinok' is a moderate man. He was reminded and admitted that all men were liable to error, even himself; accepted the principle that a fault handsomely acknowledged should be condoned; and wound the matter up with this proposal: "Tuppoti[1] I mi'take, you 'peakee me. Tuppoti you mi'take, I 'peakee you. Mo' betta."

After dinner and supper in the cabin, a glass or two of "Hennetti"—the genuine article this time, with the kirsch bouquet,—and five hours' lounging on the trade-room counter, royalty embarked for home. Three tacks grounded the boat before the palace; the wives were carried ashore on the backs of vassals; Tembinok' stepped on a railed platform like a steamer's gangway, and was borne shoulder-high through the shallows, up the beach, and by an inclined plane, paved with pebbles, to the glaring terrace where he dwells.

[1] Suppose.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

THE KING OF APEMAMA: FOUNDATION OF EQUATOR TOWN

OUR first sight of Tembinok' was a matter of concern, almost alarm, to my whole party. We had a favour to seek; we must approach in the proper courtly attitude of a suitor; and must either please him or fail in the main purpose of our voyage. It was our wish to land and live in Apemama, and see more near at hand the odd character of the man and the odd (or rather ancient) condition of his island. In all other isles of the South Seas a white man may land with his chest, and set up house for a lifetime, if he choose, and if he have the money or the trade; no hindrance is conceivable. But Apemama is a close island, lying there in the sea with closed doors; the king himself, like a vigilant officer, ready at the wicket to scrutinise and reject intrenching visitors. Hence the attraction of our enterprise; not merely because it was a little difficult, but because this social quarantine, a curiosity in itself, has been the preservative of others.

Tembinok', like most tyrants, is a conserva-

Digitized by Google

tive; like many conservatives, he eagerly welcomes new ideas, and, except in the field of politics, leans to practical reform. When the missionaries came, professing a knowledge of the truth, he readily received them; attended their worship, acquired the accomplishment of public prayer, and made himself a student at their feet. It is thus—it is by the cultivation of similar passing chances—that he has learned to read, to write, to cipher, and to speak this queer, personal English, so different from ordinary "Beach de Mar," so much more obscure, expressive, and condensed. His education attended to, he found time to become critical of the new inmates. Like Nakaeia of Makin, he is an admirer of silence in the island; broods over it like a great ear; has spies who report daily; and had rather his subjects sang than talked. The service, and in particular the sermon, were thus sure to become offences: "Here, in my island, *I 'peak*," he once observed to me. "My chieps no 'peak—do what I talk." He looked at the missionary, and what did he see? "See Kanaka 'peak in a big outch!" he cried, with a strong ring of sarcasm. Yet he endured the subversive spectacle, and might even have continued to endure it, had not a fresh point arisen. He looked again, to employ his own figure; and the Kanaka was no longer speaking, he was doing worse—he was building a copra-house. The king was touched in his chief interests; revenue

Digitized by Google

and prerogative were threatened. He considered besides (and some think with him) that trade is incompatible with the missionary claims. "Tuppoti mitonary think 'good man': very good. Tuppoti he think 'cobra': no good. I send him away ship." Such was his abrupt history of the evangelist in Apemama.

Similar deportations are common: "I send him away ship" is the epitaph of not a few, his majesty paying the exile's fare to the next place of call. For instance, being passionately fond of European food, he has several times added to his household a white cook, and one after another these have been deported. They, on their side, swear they were not paid their wages; he, on his, that they robbed and swindled him beyond endurance: both perhaps justly. A more important case was that of an agent, despatched (as I heard the story) by a firm of merchants to worm his way into the king's good graces, become, if possible, premier, and handle the copra in the interest of his employers. He obtained authority to land, practised his fascinations, was patiently listened to by Tembinok', supposed himself on the highway to success; and behold! when the next ship touched at Apemama, the would-be premier was flung into a boat—had on board—his fare paid, and so good-bye. But it is needless to multiply examples; the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When we came to Apemama, of so many white men who have

Digitized by Google

scrambled for a place in that rich market, one remained—a silent, sober, solitary, niggardly recluse, of whom the king remarks, "I think he good; he no 'peak."

I was warned at the outset we might very well fail in our design; yet never dreamed of what proved to be the fact, that we should be left four-and-twenty hours in suspense and come within an ace of ultimate rejection. Captain Reid had primed himself; no sooner was the king on board, and the Hennetti question amicably settled, than he proceeded to express my request and give an abstract of my claims and virtues. The gammon about Queen Victoria's son might do for Butaritari; it was out of the question here; and I now figured as "one of the Old Men of England," a person of deep knowledge, come expressly to visit Tembinok's dominion, and eager to report upon it to the no less eager Queen Victoria. The king made no shadow of an answer, and presently began upon a different subject. We might have thought he had not heard, or not understood; only that we found ourselves the subject of a constant study. As we sat at meals, he took us in series and fixed upon each, for near a minute at a time, the same hard and thoughtful stare. As he thus looked he seemed to forget himself, the subject and the company, and to become absorbed in the process of his thought; the look was wholly impersonal: I have seen the same in the eyes of portrait-painters.

Digitized by Google

The counts upon which whites have been deported are mainly four: cheating Tembinok', meddling overmuch with copra, which is the source of his wealth and one of the sinews of his power, '*peaking*, and political intrigue. I felt guiltless upon all; but how to show it? I would not have taken copra in a gift: how to express that quality by my dinner-table bearing? The rest of the party shared my innocence and my embarrassment. They shared also in my mortification when after two whole meal-times and the odd moments of an afternoon devoted to this reconnoitring, Tembinok' took his leave in silence. Next morning, the same undisguised study, the same silence, was resumed; and the second day had come to its maturity before I was informed abruptly that I had stood the ordeal. "I look your eye. You good man. You no lie," said the king: a doubtful compliment to a writer of romance. Later he explained he did not quite judge by the eye only, but the mouth as well. "Tuppoti I see man," he explained. "I no tavvy good man, bad man. I look eye, look mouth. Then I tavvy. Look *eye*, look mouth," he repeated. And indeed in our case the mouth had the most to do with it, and it was by our talk that we gained admission to the island; the king promising himself (and I believe really amassing) a vast amount of useful knowledge ere we left.

The terms of our admission were as follows:

Digitized by Google

We were to choose a site, and the king should there build us a town. His people should work for us, but the king only was to give them orders. One of his cooks should come daily to help mine, and to learn of him. In case our stores ran out, he would supply us, and be repaid on the return of the *Equator*. On the other hand, he was to come to meals with us when so inclined; when he stayed at home, a dish was to be sent him from our table; and I solemnly engaged to give his subjects no liquor or money (both of which they are forbidden to possess) and no tobacco, which they were to receive only from the royal hand. I think I remember to have protested against the stringency of this last article; at least, it was relaxed, and when a man worked for me I was allowed to give him a pipe of tobacco on the premises, but none to take away.

The site of Equator City—we named our city for the schooner—was soon chosen. The immediate shores of the lagoon are windy and blinding; Tembinok' himself is glad to grope blue-spectacled on his terrace; and we fled the neighbourhood of the red *conjunctiva*, the suppurating eyeball, and the beggar who pursues and beseeches the passing foreigner for eyewash. Behind the town the country is diversified; here open, sandy, uneven, and dotted with dwarfish palms; here cut up with taro trenches, deep and shallow, and, according to the growth of the plants, presenting now the appearance of a sandy

Digitized by Google

tannery, now of an alleyed and green garden. A path leads towards the sea, mounting abruptly to the main level of the island—twenty or even thirty feet, although Findlay gives five; and just hard by the top of the rise, where the coco-palms begin to be well grown, we found a grove of pandanus, and a piece of soil pleasantly covered with green underbrush. A well was not far off under a rustic well-house; nearer still, in a sandy cup of the land, a pond where we might wash our clothes. The place was out of the wind, out of the sun, and out of sight of the village. It was shown to the king, and the town promised for the morrow.

The morrow came. Mr. Osbourne landed, found nothing done, and carried his complaint to Tembinok'. He heard it, rose, called for a Winchester, stepped without the royal palisade, and fired two shots in the air. A shot in the air is the first Apemama warning; it has the force of a proclamation in more loquacious countries; and his majesty remarked agreeably that it would make his labourers "mo' bright." In less than thirty minutes, accordingly, the men had mustered, the work was begun, and we were told that we might bring our baggage when we pleased.

It was two in the afternoon ere the first boat was beached, and the long procession of chests and crates and sacks began to straggle through the sandy desert towards Equator Town. The

Digitized by Google

grove of pandanus was practically a thing of the past. Fire surrounded and smoke rose in the green underbrush. In a wide circuit the axes were still crashing. Those very advantages for which the place was chosen, it had been the king's first idea to abolish; and in the midst of this devastation there stood already a good-sized maniap' and a small closed house. A mat was spread near by for Tembinok'; here he sat superintending, in cardinal red, a pith helmet on his head, a meerschaum pipe in his mouth, a wife stretched at his back with custody of the matches and tobacco. Twenty or thirty feet in front of him the bulk of the workers squatted on the ground; some of the bush here survived; and in this the commons sat nearly to their shoulders, and presented only an arc of brown faces, black heads, and attentive eyes fixed on his majesty. Long pauses reigned, during which the subjects stared and the king smoked. Then Tembinok' would raise his voice and speak shrilly and briefly. There was never a response in words; but if the speech were jesting, there came by way of answer discreet, obsequious laughter—such laughter as we hear in schoolrooms; and if it were practical the sudden uprising and departure of the squad. Twice they so disappeared, and returned with further elements of the city; a second house and a second maniap'. It was singular to spy, far off through the coco stems, the silent oncoming of the maniap', at first (it seemed)

Digitized by Google

swimming spontaneously in the air—but on a nearer view betraying under the eaves many score of moving naked legs. In all the affair servile obedience was no less remarkable than servile deliberation. The gang had here mustered by the note of a deadly weapon; the man who looked on was the unquestioned master of their lives; and except for civility, they bestirred themselves like so many American hotel clerks. The spectator was aware of an unobtrusive yet invincible inertia, at which the skipper of a trading dandy might have torn his hair.

Yet the work was accomplished. By dusk, when his majesty withdrew, the town was founded and complete, a new and ruder Amphion having called it from nothing with three cracks of a rifle. And the next morning the same conjuror obliged us with a further miracle: a mystic rampart fencing us, so that the path which ran by our doors became suddenly impassable, the inhabitants who had business across the isle must fetch a wide circuit, and we sat in the midst in a transparent privacy, seeing, seen, but unapproachable, like bees in a glass hive. The outward and visible sign of this glamour was no more than a few ragged coco-leaf garlands wound round the stems of the outlying palms: but its significance reposed on the tremendous sanction of the tapu and the guns of Tembinok'.

We made our first meal that night in the improvised city, where we were to stay two months,

Digitized by Google

and which—so soon as we had done with it—was to vanish in a day as it appeared, its elements returning whence they came, the tapu raised, the traffic on the path resumed, the sun and the moon peering in vain between the palm-trees for the bygone work, the wind blowing over an empty site. Yet the place, which is now only an episode in some memories, seemed to have been built, and to be destined to endure, for years. It was a busy hamlet. One of the maniap's we made our dining-room, one the kitchen. The houses we reserved for sleeping. They were on the admirable Apemama plan: out and away the best house in the South Seas; standing some three feet above the ground on posts; the sides of woven flaps, which can be raised to admit light and air, or lowered to shut out the wind and the rain: airy, healthy, clean, and water-tight. We had a hen of a remarkable kind: almost unique in my experience, being a hen that occasionally laid eggs. Not far off, Mrs. Stevenson tended a garden of salad and shalots. The salad was devoured by the hen—which was her bane. The shalots were served out a leaf at a time, and welcomed and relished like peaches. Toddy and green cocoa-nuts were brought us daily. We once had a present of fish from the king, and once of a turtle. Sometimes we shot so-called plover along on the shore, sometimes wild chicken in the bush. The rest of our diet was from tins.

Digitized by Google

Our occupations were very various. While some of the party would be away sketching, Mr. Osbourne and I hammered away at a novel. We read Gibbon and Carlyle aloud; we blew on flageolets, we strummed on guitars; we took photographs by the light of the sun, the moon, and flash-powder; sometimes we played cards. Pot-hunting engaged a part of our leisure. I have myself passed afternoons in the exciting but innocuous pursuit of winged animals with a revolver; and it was fortunate there were better shots of the party, and fortunate the king could lend us a more suitable weapon, in the form of an excellent fowling-piece, or our spare diet had been sparer still.

Night was the time to see our city, after the moon was up, after the lamps were lighted, and so long as the fire sparkled in the cook-house. We suffered from a plague of flies and mosquitoes, comparable to that of Egypt; our dinner-table (lent, like all our furniture, by the king) must be enclosed in a tent of netting, our citadel and refuge; and this became all luminous, and bulged and beaconed under the eaves, like the globe of some monstrous lamp under the margin of its shade. Our cabins, the sides being propped at a variety of inclinations, spelled out strange, angular patterns of brightness. In his roofed and open kitchen, Ah Fu was to be seen by lamp and firelight, dabbling among pots. Over all, there fell in the season an extraordi-

Digitized by Google

nary splendour of mellow moonshine. The sand sparkled as with the dust of diamonds; the stars had vanished. At intervals, a dusky night-bird, slow and low flying, passed in the colonnade of the tree stems and uttered a hoarse croaking cry.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

THE KING OF APEMAMA: THE PALACE OF MANY WOMEN

THE palace, or rather the ground which it includes, is several acres in extent. A terrace encloses it towards the lagoon; on the side of the land, a palisade with several gates. These are scarce intended for defence; a man, if he were strong, might easily pluck down the palisade; he need not be especially active to leap from the beach upon the terrace. There is no parade of guards, soldiers, or weapons; the armoury is under lock and key; and the only sentinels are certain inconspicuous old women lurking day and night before the gates. By day, these crones were often engaged in boiling syrup or the like household occupation; by night, they lay ambushed in the shadow or crouched along the palisade, filling the office of eunuchs to this harem, sole guards upon a tyrant life.

Female wardens made a fit outpost for this palace of many women. Of the number of the king's wives I have no guess; and but a loose idea of their function. He himself displayed

Digitized by Google

embarrassment when they were referred to as his wives, called them himself "my pamily," and explained they were his "cutcheons"—cousins. We distinguished four of the crowd: the king's mother; his sister, a grave, trenchant woman, with much of her brother's intelligence; the queen proper, to whom (and to whom alone) my wife was formally presented; and the favourite of the hour, a pretty, graceful girl, who sat with the king daily, and once (when he shed tears) consoled him with caresses. I am assured that even with her his relations are platonic. In the background figured a multitude of ladies, the lean, the plump, and the elephantine, some in sacque frocks, some in the hair-breadth *ridi;* high-born and low, slave and mistress; from the queen to the scullion, from the favourite to the scraggy sentries at the palisade. Not all of these of course are of "my pamily"—many are mere attendants; yet a surprising number shared the responsibility of the king's trust. These were key-bearers, treasurers, wardens of the armoury, the napery, and the stores. Each knew and did her part to admiration. Should anything be required—a particular gun, perhaps, or a particular bolt of stuff—the right queen was summoned; she came bringing the right chest, opened it in the king's presence, and displayed her charge in perfect preservation—the gun cleaned and oiled, the goods duly folded. Without delay or haste, and with the minimum of

Digitized by Google

speech, the whole great establishment turned on wheels like a machine. Nowhere have I seen order more complete and pervasive. And yet I was always reminded of Norse tales of trolls and ogres who kept their hearts buried in the ground for the mere safety, and must confide the secret to their wives. For these weapons are the life of Tembinok'. He does not aim at popularity; but drives and braves his subjects, with a simplicity of domination which it is impossible not to admire, hard not to sympathise with. Should one out of so many prove faithless, should the armoury be secretly unlocked, should the crones have dozed by the palisade and the weapons find their way unseen into the village, revolution would be nearly certain, death the most probable result, and the spirit of the tyrant of Apemama flit to rejoin his predecessors of Mariki and Tapituea. Yet those whom he so trusts are all women, and all rivals.

There is indeed a ministry and staff of males: cook, steward, carpenter, and supercargoes: the hierarchy of a schooner. The spies, "his majesty's daily papers," as we called them, come every morning to report, and go again. The cook and steward are concerned with the table only. The supercargoes, whose business it is to keep tally of the copra at three pounds a month and a percentage, are rarely in the palace; and two at least are in the other islands. The carpenter, indeed, shrewd and jolly old Rubam—

Digitized by Google

query, Reuben?—promoted on my last visit to the greater dignity of governor, is daily present, altering, extending, embellishing, pursuing the endless series of the king's inventions; and his majesty will sometimes pass an afternoon watching and talking with Rubam at his work. But the males are still outsiders; none seems to be armed, none is intrusted with a key; by dusk they are all usually departed from the palace; and the weight of the monarchy and of the monarch's life reposes unshared on the women.

Here is a household unlike, indeed, to one of ours; more unlike still to the Oriental harem: that of an elderly childless man, his days menaced, dwelling alone amid a bevy of women of all ages, ranks, and relationships—the mother, the sister, the cousin, the legitimate wife, the concubine, the favourite, the eldest born, and she of yesterday; he, in their midst, the only master, the only male, the sole dispenser of honours, clothes, and luxuries, the sole mark of multitudinous ambitions and desires. I doubt if you could find a man in Europe so bold as to attempt this piece of tact and government. And seemingly Tembinok' himself had trouble in the beginning. I hear of him shooting at a wife for some levity on board a schooner. Another, on some more serious offence, he slew outright; he exposed her body in an open box, and (to make the warning more memorable) suffered it to putrefy before the palace gate. Doubtless his

Digitized by Google

growing years have come to his assistance; for upon so large a scale it is more easy to play the father than the husband. And to-day, at least to the eye of a stranger, all seems to go smoothly, and the wives to be proud of their trust, proud of their rank, and proud of their cunning lord.

I conceived they made rather a hero of the man. A popular master in a girls' school might, perhaps, offer a figure of his preponderating station. But then the master does not eat, sleep, live, and wash his dirty linen in the midst of his admirers; he escapes, he has a room of his own, he leads a private life; if he had nothing else, he has the holidays, and the more unhappy Tembinok' is always on the stage and on the stretch.

In all my coming and going, I never heard him speak harshly or express the least displeasure. An extreme, rather heavy, benignity—the benignity of one sure to be obeyed—marked his demeanour; so that I was at times reminded of Samuel Richardson in his circle of admiring women. The wives spoke up and seemed to volunteer opinions, like our wives at home—or, say, like doting but respectable aunts. Altogether, I conclude that he rules his seraglio much more by art than terror; and those who give a different account (and who have none of them enjoyed my opportunities of observation) perhaps failed to distinguish between degrees of rank, between "my pamily" and the hangers-on, laundresses, and prostitutes.

Digitized by Google

A notable feature is the evening game of cards; when lamps are set forth upon the terrace, and "I and my pamily" play for tobacco by the hour. It is highly characteristic of Tembinok' that he must invent a game for himself; highly characteristic of his worshipping household that they should swear by the absurd invention. It is founded on poker, played with the honours out of many packs, and inconceivably dreary. But I have a passion for all games, studied it, and am supposed to be the only white who ever fairly grasped its principle: a fact for which the wives (with whom I was not otherwise popular) admired me with acclamation. It was impossible to be deceived; this was a genuine feeling: they were proud of their private game, had been cut to the quick by the want of interest shown in it by others, and expanded under the flattery of my attention. Tembinok' puts up a double stake, and receives in turn two hands to choose from: a shallow artifice which the wives (in all these years) have not yet fathomed. He himself, when talking with me privately, made not the least secret that he was secure of winning; and it was thus he explained his recent liberality on board the *Equator*. He let the wives buy their own tobacco, which pleased them at the moment. He won it back at cards, which made him once more, and without fresh expense, that which he ought to be—the sole fount of all indulgences. And he summed the matter up in

Digitized by Google

that phrase with which he almost always concludes any account of his policy: "Mo' betta."

The palace compound is laid with broken coral, excruciating to the eyes and the bare feet, but exquisitely raked and weeded. A score or more of buildings lie in a sort of street along the palisade and scattered on the margin of the terrace; dwelling-houses for the wives and the attendants, storehouses for the king's curios and treasures, spacious maniap's for feast or council, some on pillars of wood, some on piers of masonry. One was still in hand, a new invention, the king's latest born: a European frame-house built for coolness inside a lofty maniap': its roof planked like a ship's deck to be a raised, shady, and yet private promenade. It was here the king spent hours with Rubam; here I would sometimes join them; the place had a most singular appearance; and I must say I was greatly taken with the fancy, and joined with relish in the counsels of the architects.

Suppose we had business with his majesty by day: we strolled over the sand and by the dwarfish palms, exchanged a "*Kŏnamaori*" with the crone on duty, and entered the compound. The wide sheet of coral glared before us deserted; all having stowed themselves in dark canvas from the excess of room. I have gone to and fro in that labyrinth of a place, seeking the king; and the only breathing creature I could find was when I peered under the eaves of a maniap',

Digitized by Google

and saw the brawny body of one of the wives stretched on the floor, a naked Amazon plunged in noiseless slumber. If it were still the hour of the "morning papers" the quest would be more easy, the half-dozen obsequious, sly dogs squatting on the ground outside a house, crammed as far as possible in its narrow shadow, and turning to the king a row of leering faces. Tembinok' would be within, the flaps of the cabin raised, the trade blowing through, hearing their report. Like journalists nearer home, when the day's news were scanty, these would make the more of it in words; and I have known one to fill up a barren morning with an imaginary conversation of two dogs. Sometimes the king deigns to laugh, sometimes to question or jest with them, his voice sounding shrilly from the cabin. By his side he may have the heir-apparent, Paul, his nephew and adopted son, six years old, stark naked, and a model of young human beauty. And there will always be the favourite and perhaps two other wives awake; four more lying supine under mats and whelmed in slumber. Or perhaps we came later, fell on a more private hour, and found Tembinok' retired in the house with the favourite, an earthenware spittoon, a leaden inkpot, and a commercial ledger. In the last, lying on his belly, he writes from day to day the uneventful history of his reign; and when thus employed he betrayed a touch of fretfulness on interruption with which I was well able to sym-

Digitized by Google

pathise. The royal annalist once read me a page or so, translating as he went; but the passage being genealogical, and the author boggling extremely in his version, I own I have been sometimes better entertained. Nor does he confine himself to prose, but touches the lyre too, in his leisure moments, and passes for the chief bard of his kingdom, as he is its sole public character, leading architect, and only merchant. His competence, however, does not reach to music; and his verses, when they are ready, are taught to a professional musician, who sets them and instructs the chorus. Asked what his songs were about, Tembinok' replied, "Sweethearts and trees and the sea. Not all the same true, all the same lie." For a condensed view of lyrical poetry (except that he seems to have forgot the stars and flowers) this would be hard to mend. These multifarious occupations bespeak (in a native and an absolute prince) unusual activity of mind.

The palace court at noon is a spot to be remembered with awe, the visitor scrambling there, on the loose stones, through a splendid nightmare of light and heat; but the sweep of the wind delivers it from flies and mosquitoes; and with the set of sun it became heavenly. I remember it best on moonless nights. The air was like a bath of milk. Countless shining stars were overhead, the lagoon paved with them. Herds of wives squatted by companies on the gravel,

Digitized by Google

softly chatting. Tembinok' would doff his jacket, and sit bare and silent, perhaps meditating songs; the favourite usually by him, silent also. Meanwhile in the midst of the court, the palace lanterns were being lit and marshalled in rank upon the ground—six or eight square yards of them; a sight that gave one strange ideas of the number of "my pamily": such a sight as may be seen about dusk in a corner of some great terminus at home. Presently these fared off into all corners of the precinct, lighting the last labours of the day, lighting one after another to their rest that prodigious company of women. A few lingered in the middle of the court for the card-party, and saw the honours shuffled and dealt, and Tembinok' deliberating between his two hands, and the queens losing their tobacco. Then these also were scattered and extinguished; and their place was taken by a great bonfire, the night-light of the palace. When this was no more, smaller fires burned likewise at the gates. These were tended by the crones, unseen, unsleeping—not always unheard. Should any approach in the dark hours, a guarded alert made the circuit of the palisade; each sentry signalled her neighbour with a stone; the rattle of falling pebbles passed and died away; and the wardens of Tembinok' crouched in their places silent as before.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

THE KING OF APEMAMA: EQUATOR TOWN AND THE PALACE

FIVE persons were detailed to wait upon us. Uncle Parker, who brought us toddy and green nuts, was an elderly, almost an old man, with the spirits, the industry, and the morals of a boy of ten. His face was ancient, droll, and diabolical, the skin stretched over taut sinews, like a sail on the guide-rope; and he smiled with every muscle of his head. His nuts must be counted every day, or he would deceive us in the tale; they must be daily examined, or some would prove to be unhusked; nothing but the king's name, and scarcely that, would hold him to his duty. After his toils were over he was given a pipe, matches, and tobacco, and sat on the floor in the maniap' to smoke. He would not seem to move from his position, and yet every day, when the things fell to be returned, the plug had disappeared; he had found the means to conceal it in the roof, whence he could radiantly produce it on the morrow. Although this piece of legerdemain was performed regularly before three or

Digitized by Google

four pairs of eyes, we could never catch him in the fact; although we searched after he was gone, we could never find the tobacco. Such were the diversions of Uncle Parker, a man nearing sixty. But he was punished according unto his deeds: Mrs. Stevenson took a fancy to paint him, and the sufferings of the sitter were beyond description.

Three lasses came from the palace to do our washing and racket with Ah Fu. They were of the lowest class, hangers-on kept for the convenience of merchant skippers, probably low-born, perhaps out-islanders, with little refinement whether of manner or appearance, but likely and jolly enough wenches in their way. We called one *Guttersnipe*, for you may find her image in the slums of any city: the same lean, dark-eyed, eager, vulgar face, the same sudden, hoarse guffaws, the same forward and yet anxious manner, as with a tail of an eye on the policeman: only the policeman here was a live king, and his truncheon a rifle. I doubt if you could find anywhere out of the islands, or often there, the parallel of *Fatty*, a mountain of a girl, who must have weighed near as many stones as she counted summers, could have given a good account of a life-guardsman, had the face of a baby, and applied her vast mechanical forces almost exclusively to play. But they were all three of the same merry spirit. Our washing was conducted in a game of romps; and they fled and pursued,

Digitized by Google

and splashed, and pelted, and rolled each other in the sand, and kept up a continuous noise of cries and laughter like holiday children. Indeed, and however strange their own function in that austere establishment, were they not escaped for the day from the largest and strictest Ladies' School in the South Seas?

Our fifth attendant was no less a person than the royal cook. He was strikingly handsome both in face and body, lazy as a slave, and insolent as a butcher's boy. He slept and smoked on our premises in various graceful attitudes; but so far from helping Ah Fu, he was not at the pains to watch him. It may be said of him that he came to learn, and remained to teach; and his lessons were at times difficult to stomach. For example, he was sent to fill a bucket from the well. About half-way he found my wife watering her onions, changed buckets with her, and leaving her the empty, returned to the kitchen with the full. On another occasion he was given a dish of dumplings for the king, was told they must be eaten hot, and that he should carry them as fast as possible. The wretch set off at the rate of about a mile in the hour, head in air, toes turned out. My patience, after a month of trial, failed me at the sight. I pursued, caught him by his two big shoulders, and thrusting him before me, ran with him down the hill, over the sands, and through the applauding village, to the Speak House, where the king was

Digitized by Google

then holding a pow-wow. He had the impudence to pretend he was internally injured by my violence, and to profess serious apprehensions for his life.

All this we endured; for the ways of Tembinok' are summary, and I was not yet ripe to take a hand in the man's death. But in the meanwhile, here was my unfortunate China boy slaving for the pair, and presently he fell sick. I was now in the position of Cimondain Lantenac, and indeed all the characters in *Quatre-Vingt-Treize:* to continue to spare the guilty, I must sacrifice the innocent. I took the usual course and tried to save both, with the usual consequence of failure. Well rehearsed, I went down to the palace, found the king alone, and obliged him with a vast amount of rigmarole. The cook was too old to learn: I feared he was not making progress; how if we had a boy instead? —boys were more teachable. It was all in vain; the king pierced through my disguises to the root of the fact; saw that the cook had desperately misbehaved; and sat a while glooming. "I think he tavvy too much," he said at last, with grim concision; and immediately turned the talk to other subjects. The same day another high officer, the steward, appeared in the cook's place, and, I am bound to say, proved civil and industrious.

As soon as I left, it seems the king called for a Winchester and strolled outside the palisade,

Digitized by Google

awaiting the defaulter. That day Tembinok' wore the woman's frock; as like as not, his make-up was completed by a pith helmet and blue spectacles. Conceive the glaring stretch of sandhills, the dwarf palms with their noonday shadows, the line of the palisade, the crone sentries (each by a small clear fire) cooking syrup on their posts—and this chimæra waiting with his deadly engine. To him, enter at last the cook, strolling down the sandhill from Equator Town, listless, vain, and graceful; with no thought of alarm. As soon as he was well within range, the travestied monarch fired the six shots over his head, at his feet, and on either hand of him: the second Apemama warning, startling in itself, fatal in significance, for the next time his majesty will aim to hit. I am told the king is a crack shot; that when he aims to kill, the grave may be got ready; and when he aims to miss, misses by so near a margin that the culprit tastes six times the bitterness of death. The effect upon the cook I had an opportunity of seeing for myself. My wife and I were returning from the sea-side of the island, when we spied one coming to meet us at a very quick, disordered pace, between a walk and a run. As we drew nearer we saw it was the cook, beside himself with some emotion, his usual warm, mulatto colour declined into a bluish pallor. He passed us without word or gesture, staring on us with the face of a Satan, and plunged on across the wood for the unpeo-

Digitized by Google

pled quarter of the island and the long, desert beach, where he might rage to and fro unseen, and froth out the vials of his wrath, fear, and humiliation. Doubtless in the curses that he there uttered to the bursting surf and the tropic birds, the name of the Kaupoi—the rich man—was frequently repeated. I had made him the laughing-stock of the village in the affair of the king's dumplings; I had brought him by my machinations into disgrace and the immediate jeopardy of his days; last, and perhaps bitterest, he had found me there by the way to spy upon him in the hour of his disorder.

Time passed, and we saw no more of him. The season of the full moon came round, when a man thinks shame to lie sleeping; and I continued until late—perhaps till twelve or one in the morning—to walk on the bright sand and in the tossing shadow of the palms. I played, as I wandered, on a flageolet, which occupied much of my attention; the fans overhead rattled in the wind with a metallic chatter; and a bare foot falls at any rate almost noiseless on that shifting soil. Yet when I got back to Equator Town, where all the lights were out, and my wife (who was still awake and had been looking forth) asked me who it was that followed me, I thought she spoke in jest. "Not at all," she said. "I saw him twice as you passed, walking close at your heels. He only left you at the corner of the maniap'; he must be still behind the cook-house." Thither

Digitized by Google

I ran—like a fool, without any weapon—and came face to face with the cook. He was within my tapu-line, which was death in itself; he could have no business there at such an hour but either to steal or to kill; guilt made him timorous; and he turned and fled before me in the night in silence. As he went I kicked him in that place where honour lies, and he gave tongue faintly like an injured mouse. At the moment I daresay he supposed it was a deadly instrument that touched him.

What had the man been after? I have found my music better qualified to scatter than to collect an audience. Amateur as I was, I could not suppose him interested in my reading of the *Carnival of Venice*, or that he would deny himself his natural rest to follow my variations on *The Ploughboy*. And whatever his design, it was impossible I should suffer him to prowl by night among the houses. A word to the king, and the man were not, his case being far beyond pardon. But it is one thing to kill a man yourself; quite another to bear tales behind his back and have him shot by a third party; and I determined to deal with the fellow in some method of my own. I told Ah Fu the story, and bade him fetch me the cook whenever he should find him. I had supposed this would be a matter of difficulty; and far from that, he came of his own accord: an act really of desperation, since his life hung by my silence, and the best he could

Digitized by Google

hope was to be forgotten. Yet he came with an assured countenance, volunteered no apology or explanation, complained of injuries received, and pretended he was unable to sit down. I suppose I am the weakest man God made; I had kicked him in the least vulnerable part of his big carcase; my foot was bare, and I had not even hurt my foot. Ah Fu could not control his merriment. On my side, knowing what must be the nature of his apprehensions, I found in so much impudence a kind of gallantry, and secretly admired the man. I told him I should say nothing of his night's adventure to the king; that I should still allow him, when he had an errand, to come within my tapu-line by day; but if ever I found him there after the set of the sun I would shoot him on the spot; and to the proof showed him a revolver. He must have been incredibly relieved; but he showed no sign of it, took himself off with his usual dandy nonchalance, and was scarce seen by us again.

These five, then, with the substitution of the steward for the cook, came and went, and were our only visitors. The circle of the tapu held at arm's-length the inhabitants of the village. As for "my pamily," they dwelt like nuns in their enclosure; only once have I met one of them abroad, and she was the king's sister, and the place in which I found her (the island infirmary) was very likely privileged. There remains only the king to be accounted for. He would come

Digitized by Google

strolling over, always alone, a little before a meal-time, take a chair, and talk and eat with us like an old family friend. Gilbertine etiquette appears defective on the point of leave-taking. It may be remembered we had trouble in the matter with Karaiti; and there was something childish and disconcerting in Tembinok's abrupt "I want go home now," accompanied by a kind of ducking rise, and followed by an unadorned retreat. It was the only blot upon his manners, which were otherwise plain, decent, sensible, and dignified. He never stayed long nor drank much, and copied our behaviour where he perceived it to differ from his own. Very early in the day, for instance, he ceased eating with his knife. It was plain he was determined in all things to wring profit from our visit, and chiefly upon etiquette. The quality of his white visitors puzzled and concerned him; he would bring up name after name, and ask if its bearer were a "big chiep," or even a "chiep" at all—which, as some were my excellent good friends, and none were actually born in the purple, became at times embarrassing. He was struck to learn that our classes were distinguishable by their speech, and that certain words (for instance) were tapu on the quarterdeck of a man-of-war; and he begged in consequence that we should watch and correct him on the point. We were able to assure him that he was beyond correction. His vocabulary is apt and ample to

Digitized by Google

an extraordinary degree. God knows where he collected it, but by some instinct or some accident he has avoided all profane or gross expressions. "Obliged," "stabbed," "gnaw," "lodge," "power," "company," "slender," "smooth," and "wonderful," are a few of the unexpected words that enrich his dialect. Perhaps what pleased him most was to hear about saluting the quarterdeck of a man-of-war. In his gratitude for this hint he became fulsome. "Schooner cap'n no tell me," he cried; "I think no tavvy! You tavvy too much; tavvy 'teama', tavvy man-a-wa'. I think you tavvy everything." Yet he gravelled me often enough with his perpetual questions; and the false Mr. Barlow stood frequently exposed before the royal Sandford. I remember once in particular. We were showing the magic-lantern; a slide of Windsor Castle was put in, and I told him there was the "outch" of Victoreea. "How many pathom he high?" he asked, and I was dumb before him. It was the builder, the indefatigable architect of palaces, that spoke; collector though he was, he did not collect useless information; and all his questions had a purpose. After etiquette, government, law, the police, money, and medicine were his chief interests—things vitally important to himself as a king and the father of his people. It was my part not only to supply new information, but to correct the old. "My patha he tell me," or "White man he tell me,"

Digitized by Google

would be his constant beginning. "You think he lie?" Sometimes I thought he did. Tembinok' once brought me a difficulty of this kind, which I was long of comprehending. A schooner captain had told him of Captain Cook; the king was much interested in the story; and turned for more information—not to Mr. Stephen's Dictionary, not to the *Britannica*, but to the Bible in the Gilbert Island version (which consists chiefly of the New Testament and the Psalms). Here he sought long and earnestly; Paul he found, and Festus, and Alexander the coppersmith: no word of Cook. The inference was obvious: the explorer was a myth. So hard it is, even for a man of great natural parts like Tembinok', to grasp the ideas of a new society and culture.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

KING AND COMMONS

WE saw but little of the commons of the isle. At first we met them at the well, where they washed their linen and we drew water for the table. The combination was distasteful; and, having a tyrant at command, we applied to the king and had the place enclosed in our tapu. It was one of the few favours which Tembinok' visibly boggled about granting, and it may be conceived how little popular it made the strangers. Many villagers passed us daily going afield; but they fetched a wide circuit round our tapu, and seemed to avert their looks. At times we went ourselves into the village—a strange place. Dutch by its canals, Oriental by the height and steepness of the roofs, which looked at dusk like temples; but we were rarely called into a house: no welcome, no friendship, was offered us; and of home life we had but the one view: the waking of a corpse, a frigid, painful scene: the widow holding on her lap the cold, bluish body of her husband, and now partaking of the refreshments which made the round of the

Digitized by Google

company, now weeping and kissing the pale mouth. ("I fear you feel this affliction deeply," said the Scottish minister. "Eh, sir, and that I do!" replied the widow. "I've been greetin' a' nicht; an' noo I'm just gaun to sup this bit parritch, and then I'll begin an' greet again.") In our walks abroad I have always supposed the islanders avoided us, perhaps from distaste, perhaps by order: and those whom we met we took generally by surprise. The surface of the isle is diversified with palm groves, thickets, and romantic dingles four feet deep, relics of old taro plantation; and it is thus possible to stumble unawares on folk resting or hiding from their work. About pistol-shot from our township there lay a pond in the bottom of a jungle; here the maids of the isle came to bathe, and were several times alarmed by our intrusion. Not for them are the bright cold rivers of Tahiti or Upolu, not for them to splash and laugh in the hour of the dusk with a villageful of gay companions; but to steal here solitary, to crouch in a place like a cow-wallow, and wash (if that can be called washing) in lukewarm mud, brown as their own skins. Other, but still rare, encounters occur to my memory. I was several times arrested by a tender sound in the bush of voices talking, soft as flutes and with quiet intonations. Hope told a flattering tale; I put aside the leaves; and behold! in place of the expected dryads, a pair of all too solid ladies squatting over a clay

Digitized by Google

pipe in the ungraceful *ridi*. The beauty of the voice and the eye was all that remained to these vast dames; but that of the voice was indeed exquisite. It is strange I should have never heard a more winning sound of speech, yet the dialect should be one remarkable for violent, ugly, and outlandish vocables; so that Tembinok' himself declared it made him weary, and professed to find repose in talking English.

The state of this folk, of whom I saw so little, I can merely guess at. The king himself explains the situation with some art. "No; I no pay them," he once said. "I give them tobacco. They work for me *all the same brothers*." It is true there was a brother once in Arden! But we prefer the shorter word. They bear every servile mark,—levity like a child's, incurable idleness, incurious content. The insolence of the cook was a trait of his own; not so his levity, which he shared with the innocent Uncle Parker. With equal unconcern both gambolled under the shadow of the gallows, and took liberties with death that might have surprised a careless student of man's nature. I wrote of Parker that he behaved like a boy of ten: what was he else, being a slave of sixty? He had passed all his years in school, fed, clad, thought for, commanded; and had grown familiar and coquetted with the fear of punishment. By terror you may drive men long, but not far. Here, in Apemama, they work at the constant and the

Digitized by Google

instant peril of their lives; and are plunged in a kind of lethargy of laziness. It is common to see one go afield in his stiff mat ungirt, so that he walks elbows-in like a trussed fowl; and whatsoever his right hand findeth to do, the other must be off duty holding on his clothes. It is common to see two men carrying between them on a pole a single bucket of water. To make two bites of a cherry is good enough: to make two burthens of a soldier's kit, for a distance of perhaps half a furlong, passes measure. Woman, being the less childish animal, is less relaxed by servile conditions. Even in the king's absence, even when they were alone, I have seen Apemama women work with constancy. But the outside to be hoped for in a man is that he may attack his task in little languid fits, and lounge betweenwhiles. So I have seen a painter, with his pipe going, and a friend by the studio fireside. You might suppose the race to lack civility, even vitality, until you saw them in the dance. Night after night, and sometimes day after day, they rolled out their choruses in the great Speak House—solemn andantes and adagios, led by the clapped hand, and delivered with an energy that shook the roof. The time was not so slow, though it was slow for the islands; but I have chosen rather to indicate the effect upon the hearer. Their music had a church-like character from near at hand, and seemed to European ears more regular than the run of island music.

Digitized by Google

Twice I have heard a discord regularly solved. From farther off, heard at Equator Town for instance, the measures rose and fell and crepitated like the barking of hounds in a distant kennel.

The slaves are certainly not overworked—children of ten do more without fatigue—and the Apemama labourers have holidays, when the singing begins early in the afternoon. The diet is hard; copra and a sweetmeat of pounded pandanus are the only dishes I observed outside the palace; but there seems no defect in quantity, and the king shares with them his turtles. Three came in a boat from Kuria during our stay; one was kept for the palace, one sent to us, one presented to the village. It is the habit of the islanders to cook the turtle in its carapace; we had been promised the shells, and we asked a tapu on this foolish practice. The face of Tembinok' darkened and he answered nothing. Hesitation in the question of the well I could understand, for water is scarce on a low island; that he should refuse to interfere upon a point of cookery was more than I had dreamed of; and I gathered (rightly or wrongly) that he was scrupulous of touching in the least degree the private life and habits of his slaves. So that even here, in full despotism, public opinion has weight; even here, in the midst of slavery, freedom has a corner.

Orderly, sober, and innocent, life flows in the

Digitized by Google

isle from day to day as in a model plantation under a model planter. It is impossible to doubt the beneficence of that stern rule. A curious politeness, a soft and gracious manner, something effeminate and courtly, distinguishes the islanders of Apemama; it is talked of by all the traders, it was felt even by residents so little beloved as ourselves, and noticeable even in the cook, and even in that scoundrel's hours of insolence. The king, with his manly and plain bearing, stood out alone; you might say he was the only Gilbert Islander in Apemama. Violence, so common in Butaritari, seems unknown. So are theft and drunkenness. I am assured the experiment has been made of leaving sovereigns on the beach before the village: they lay there untouched. In all our time on the island I was but once asked for drink. This was by a mighty plausible fellow, wearing European clothes and speaking excellent English—Tamaiti his name, or, as the whites have now corrupted it, "Tom White": one of the king's supercargoes at three pounds a month and a percentage, a medical man besides, and in his private hours a wizard. He found me one day in the outskirts of the village, in a secluded place, hot and private, where the taro-pits are deep and the plants high. Here he buttonholed me, and, looking about him like a conspirator, inquired if I had gin.

I told him I had. He remarked that gin was forbidden, lauded the prohibition a while, and

Digitized by Google

then went on to explain that he was a doctor, or "dogstar" as he pronounced the word, that gin was necessary to him for his medical infusions, that he was quite out of it, and that he would be obliged to me for some in a bottle. I told him I had passed the king my word on landing; but since his case was so exceptional, I would go down to the palace at once, and had no doubt that Tembinok' would set me free. Tom White was immediately overwhelmed with embarrassment and terror, besought me in the most moving terms not to betray him, and fled my neighbourhood. He had none of the cook's valour; it was weeks before he dared to meet my eye; and then only by the order of the king and on particular business.

The more I viewed and admired this triumph of firm rule, the more I was haunted and troubled by a problem, the problem (perhaps) of to-morrow for ourselves. Here was a people protected from all serious misfortune, relieved of all serious anxieties, and deprived of what we call our liberty. Did they like it? and what was their sentiment towards the ruler? The first question I could not of course ask, nor perhaps the natives answer. Even the second was delicate; yet at last, and under charming and strange circumstances, I found my opportunity to put it and a man to reply. It was near the full of the moon, with a delicious breeze; the isle was bright as day—to sleep would have been sacri-

Digitized by Google

lege; and I walked in the bush, playing my pipe. It must have been the sound of what I am pleased to call my music that attracted in my direction another wanderer of the night. This was a young man attired in a fine mat, and with a garland on his hair, for he was new come from dancing and singing in the public hall; and his body, his face, and his eyes, were all of an enchanting beauty. Every here and there in the Gilberts youths are to be found of this absurd perfection; I have seen five of us pass half an hour in admiration of a boy at Mariki; and Te Kop (my friend in the fine mat and garland) I had already several times remarked, and long ago set down as the loveliest animal in Apemama. The philtre of admiration must be very strong, or these natives specially susceptible to its effects, for I have scarce ever admired a person in the islands but what he has sought my particular acquaintance. So it was with Te Kop. He led me to the ocean side; and for an hour or two we sat smoking and talking on the resplendent sand and under the ineffable brightness of the moon. My friend showed himself very sensible of the beauty and amenity of the hour. "Good night! Good wind!" he kept exclaiming, and as he said the words he seemed to hug himself. I had long before invented such reiterated expressions of delight for a character (Felipe, in the story of *Olalla*) intended to be partly bestial. But there was nothing bestial in Te Kop; only

Digitized by Google

a childish pleasure in the moment. He was no less pleased with his companion, or was good enough to say so; honoured me, before he left, by calling me Te Kop; apostrophised me as "My name!" with an intonation exquisitely tender, laying his hand at the same time swiftly on my knee; and after we had risen, and our paths began to separate in the bush, twice cried to me with a sort of gentle ecstasy, "I like you too much!" From the beginning he had made no secret of his terror of the king; would not sit down or speak above a whisper till he had put the whole breadth of the isle between himself and his monarch, then harmlessly asleep; and even there, even within a stone-cast of the outer sea, our talk covered by the sound of the surf and the rattle of the wind among the palms, continued to speak guardedly, softening his silver voice (which rang loud enough in the chorus) and looking about him like a man in fear of spies. The strange thing is that I should have beheld him no more. In any other island in the whole South Seas, if I had advanced half as far with any native, he would have been at my door next morning, bringing and expecting gifts. But Te Kop vanished in the bush for ever. My house, of course, was unapproachable; but he knew where to find me on the ocean beach, where I went daily. I was the *Kaupoi*, the rich man; my tobacco and trade were known to be endless; he was sure of a present. I am at a loss how to

Digitized by Google

explain his behaviour, unless it be supposed that he recalled with terror and regret a passage in our interview. Here it is:

"The king, he good man?" I asked.

"Suppose he like you, he good man," replied Te Kop: "no like, no good."

That is one way of putting it, of course. Te Kop himself was probably no favourite, for he scarce appealed to my judgment as a type of industry. And there must be many others whom the king (to adhere to the formula) does not like. Do these unfortunates like the king? Or is not rather the repulsion mutual? and the conscientious Tembinok', like the conscientious Braxfield before him, and many other conscientious rulers and judges before either, surrounded by a considerable body of *grumletonians?* Take the cook, for instance, when he passed us by, blue with rage and terror. He was very wroth with me; I think by all the old principles of human nature he was not very well pleased with his sovereign. It was the rich man he sought to waylay: I think it must have been by the turn of a hair that it was not the king he waylaid instead. And the king gives, or seems to give, plenty of opportunities; day and night he goes abroad alone, whether armed or not I can but guess; and the taro-patches, where his business must so often carry him, seem designed for assassination. The case of the cook was heavy indeed to my conscience. I did not like

Digitized by Google

to kill my enemy at secondhand; but had I a right to conceal from the king, who had trusted me, the dangerous secret character of his attendant? And suppose the king should fall, what would be the fate of the king's friends? It was our opinion at the time that we should pay dear for the closing of the well; that our breath was in the king's nostrils; that if the king should by any chance be bludgeoned in a taro-patch, the philosophical and musical inhabitants of Equator Town might lay aside their pleasant instruments, and betake themselves to what defence they had, with a very dim prospect of success. These speculations were forced upon us by an incident which I am ashamed to betray. The schooner *H. L. Haselline* (since capsized at sea, with the loss of eleven lives) put in to Apemama in a good hour for us, who had near exhausted our supplies. The king, after his habit, spent day after day on board; the gin proved unhappily to his taste; he brought a store of it ashore with him; and for some time the sole tyrant of the isle was half-seas over. He was not drunk—the man is not a drunkard, he has always stores of liquor at hand, which he uses with moderation—but he was muzzy, dull, and confused. He came one day to lunch with us, and while the cloth was being laid fell asleep in his chair. His confusion, when he awoke and found he had been detected, was equalled by our uneasiness. When he was gone we sat and spoke of his peril, which

Digitized by Google

we thought to be in some degree our own; of how easily the man might be surprised in such a state by *grumbletonians;* of the strange scenes that would follow—the royal treasures and stores at the mercy of the rabble, the palace overrun, the garrison of women turned adrift. And as we talked we were startled by a gun-shot and a sudden, barbaric outcry. I believe we all changed colour; but it was only the king firing at a dog and the chorus striking up in the Speak House. A day or two later I learned the king was very sick; went down, diagnosed the case; and took at once the highest medical degree by the exhibition of bicarbonate of soda. Within the hour Richard was himself again; and I found him at the unfinished house, enjoying the double pleasure of directing Rubam and making a dinner off cocoa-nut dumplings, and all eagerness to have the formula of this new sort of *pain-killer*—for *pain-killer* in the islands is the generic name of medicine. So ended the king's modest spree and our anxiety.

On the face of things, I ought to say, loyalty appeared unshaken. When the schooner at last returned for us, after much experience of baffling winds, she brought a rumour that Tebureimoa had declared war on Apemama. Tembinok' became a new man; his face radiant; his attitude, as I saw him preside over a council of chiefs in one of the palace maniap's, eager as a boy's; his voice sounding abroad, shrill and jubilant, over

Digitized by Google

half the compound. War is what he wants, and here was his chance. The English captain, when he flung his arms in the lagoon, had forbidden him (except in one case) all military adventures in the future: here was the case arrived. All morning the council sat; men were drilled, arms were bought, the sound of firing disturbed the afternoon; the king devised and communicated to me his plan of campaign, which was highly elaborate and ingenious, but perhaps a trifle fine-spun for the rough and random vicissitudes of war. And in all this bustle the temper of the people appeared excellent, an unwonted animation in every face, and even Uncle Parker burning with military zeal.

Of course it was a false alarm. Tebureimoa had other fish to fry. The ambassador who accompanied us on our return to Butaritari found him retired to a small island on the reef, in a huff with the Old Men, a tiff with the traders, and more fear of insurrection at home than appetite for wars abroad. The plenipotentiary had been placed under my protection; and we solemnly saluted when we met. He proved an excellent fisherman, and caught bonito over the ship's side. He pulled a good oar, and made himself useful for a whole fiery afternoon, towing the becalmed *Equator* off Mariki. He went to his post and did no good. He returned home again, having done no harm. *O si sic omnes!*

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

THE KING OF APEMAMA: DEVIL-WORK

THE ocean beach of Apemama was our daily resort. The coast is broken by shallow bays. The reef is detached, elevated, and includes a lagoon about knee-deep, the unrestful spending-basin of the surf. The beach is now of fine sand, now of broken coral. The trend of the coast being convex, scarce a quarter of a mile of it is to be seen at once; the land being so low, the horizon appears within a stone-cast; and the narrow prospect enhances the sense of privacy. Man avoids the place—even his footprints are uncommon; but a great number of birds hover and pipe there fishing, and leave crooked tracks upon the sand. Apart from these, the only sound (and I was going to say the only society) is that of the breakers on the reef.

On each projection of the coast, the bank of coral clinkers immediately above the beach has been levelled, and a pillar built, perhaps breast-high. These are not sepulchral; all the dead be-

Digitized by Google

ing buried on the inhabited side of the island, close to men's houses, and (what is worse) to their wells. I was told they were to protect the isle against inroads from the sea—divine or diabolical martellos, probably sacred to Taburik, God of Thunder.

The bay immediately opposite Equator Town, which we called Fu Bay, in honour of our cook, was thus fortified on either horn. It was well sheltered by the reef, the enclosed water clear and tranquil, the enclosing beach curved like a horseshoe, and both steep and broad. The path debouched about the midst of the re-entrant angle, the woods stopping some distance inland. In front, between the fringe of the wood and the crown of the beach, there had been designed a regular figure, like the court for some new variety of tennis, with borders of round stones imbedded, and pointed at the angles with low posts, likewise of stone. This was the king's Pray Place. When he prayed, what he prayed for, and to whom he addressed his supplications, I could never learn. The ground was tapu.

In the angle, by the mouth of the path, stood a deserted maniap'. Near by there had been a house before our coming, which was now transported and figured for the moment in Equator Town. It had been, and it would be again when we departed, the residence of the guardian and wizard of the spot—Tamaiti. Here, in this lone place, within sound of the sea, he had his dwell-

Digitized by Google

ing and uncanny duties. I cannot call to mind another case of a man living on the ocean side of any open atoll; and Tamaiti must have had strong nerves, the greater confidence in his own spells, or, what I believe to be the truth, an enviable scepticism. Whether Tamaiti had any guardianship of the Pray Place I never heard. But his own particular chapel stood farther back in the fringe of the wood. It was a tree of respectable growth. Around it there was drawn a circle of stones like those that enclosed the Pray Place; in front, facing towards the sea, a stone of a much greater size, and somewhat hollowed, like a piscina, stood close against the trunk; in front of that again a conical pile of gravel. In the hollow of what I have called the piscina (though it proved to be a magic seat) lay an offering of green cocoa-nuts; and when you looked up you found the boughs of the tree to be laden with strange fruit: palm branches elaborately plaited, and beautiful models of canoes, finished and rigged to the least detail. The whole had the appearance of a midsummer and sylvan Christmas-tree *al fresco*. Yet we were already well enough acquainted in the Gilberts to recognise it, at the first sight, for a piece of wizardry, or, as they say in the group, of Devil-work.

The plaited palms were what we recognised. We had seen them before on Apaiang, the most christianised of all these islands; where excellent Mr. Bingham lived and laboured and has left

Digitized by Google

golden memories; whence all the education in the northern Gilberts traces its descent; and where we were boarded by little native Sunday-school misses in clean frocks, with demure faces, and singing hymns as to the manner born.

Our experience of Devil-work at Apaiang had been as follows:—It chanced we were benighted at the house of Captain Tierney. My wife and I lodged with a Chinaman some half a mile away; and thither Captain Reid and a native boy escorted us by torchlight. On the way the torch went out, and we took shelter in a small and lonely Christian chapel to rekindle it. Stuck in the rafters of the chapel was a branch of knotted palm. "What is that?" I asked. "O, that's Devil-work," said the Captain. "And what is Devil-work?" I inquired. "If you like, I'll show you some when we get to Johnnie's," he replied. "Johnnie's" was a quaint little house upon the crest of the beach, raised some three feet on posts, approached by stairs; part walled, part trellised. Trophies of advertisement photographs were hung up within for decoration. There was a table and a recess-bed, in which Mrs. Stevenson slept; while I camped on the matted floor with Johnnie, Mrs. Johnnie, her sister, and the devil's own regiment of cockroaches. Hither was summoned an old witch, who looked the part to horror. The lamp was set on the floor; the crone squatted on the threshold, a green palm-branch in her hand, the light

Digitized by Google

striking full on her aged features and picking out behind her, from the black night, timorous faces of spectators. Our sorceress began with a chanted incantation; it was in the old tongue, for which I had no interpreter; but ever and again there ran among the crowd outside that laugh which every traveller in the islands learns so soon to recognise,—the laugh of terror. Doubtless these half-Christian folk were shocked, these half-heathen folk alarmed. Chench or Taburik thus invoked, we put our questions; the witch knotted the leaves, here a leaf and there a leaf, plainly on some arithmetical system; studied the result with great apparent contention of mind; and gave the answers. Sidney Colvin was in robust health and gone a journey; and we should have a fair wind upon the morrow; that was the result of our consultation, for which we paid a dollar. The next day dawned cloudless and breathless; but I think Captain Reid placed a secret reliance on the sybil, for the schooner was got ready for sea. By eight the lagoon was flawed with long cat's-paws, and the palms tossed and rustled; before ten we were clear of the passage and skimming under all plain sail, with bubbling scuppers. So we had the breeze, which was well worth a dollar in itself; but the bulletin about my friend in England proved some six months later, when I got my mail, to have been groundless. Perhaps London lies beyond the horizon of the island gods.

Digitized by Google

Tembinok', in his first dealings, showed himself sternly averse from superstition: and had not the *Equator* delayed, we might have left the island and still supposed him an agnostic. It chanced one day, however, that he came to our maniap', and found Mrs. Stevenson in the midst of a game of patience. She explained the game as well as she was able, and wound up jocularly by telling him this was her devil-work, and if she won, the *Equator* would arrive next day. Tembinok' must have drawn a long breath; we were not so high and dry after all; he need no longer dissemble, and he plunged at once into confessions. He made devil-work every day, he told us, to know if ships were coming in; and thereafter brought us regular reports of the results. It was surprising how regularly he was wrong; but he had always an explanation ready. There had been some schooner in the offing out of view; but either she was not bound for Apemama, or had changed her course, or lay becalmed. I used to regard the king with veneration as he thus publicly deceived himself. I saw behind him all the fathers of the Church, all the philosophers and men of science of the past; before him, all those that are to come; himself in the midst; the whole visionary series bowed over the same task of welding incongruities. To the end Tembinok' spoke reluctantly of the island gods and their worship, and I learned but little. Taburik is the god of thunder, and deals

Digitized by Google

in wind and weather. A while since there were wizards who could call him down in the form of lightning. "My patha he tell me he see: you think he lie?" Tienti—pronounced something like "Chench," and identified by his majesty with the devil—sends and removes bodily sickness. He is whistled for in the Paumotuan manner, and is said to appear; but the king has never seen him. The doctors treat disease by the aid of Chench: eclectic Tembinok' at the same time administering "pain-killer" from his medicine-chest, so as to give the sufferer both chances. "I think mo' betta," observed his majesty, with more than his usual self-approval. Apparently the gods are not jealous, and placidly enjoy both shrine and priest in common. On Tamaiti's medicine-tree, for instance, the model canoes are hung up *ex voto* for a prosperous voyage, and must therefore be dedicated to Taburik, god of the weather; but the stone in front is the place of sick folk come to pacify Chench.

It chanced, by great good luck, that even as we spoke of these affairs, I found myself threatened with a cold. I do not suppose I was ever glad of a cold before, or shall ever be again; but the opportunity to see the sorcerers at work was priceless, and I called in the faculty of Apemama. They came in a body, all in their Sunday's best and hung with wreaths and shells, the insignia of the devil-worker. Tamaiti I knew already: Terutak' I saw for the first time—a tall, lank,

Digitized by Google

raw-boned, serious North Sea fisherman turned brown; and there was a third in their company whose name I never heard, and who played to Tamaiti the part of *famulus*. Tamaiti took me in hand first, and led me, conversing agreeably, to the shores of Fu Bay. The *famulus* climbed a tree for some green cocoa-nuts. Tamaiti himself disappeared a while in the bush and returned with coco tinder, dry leaves, and a spray of wax-berry. I was placed on the stone, with my back to the tree and my face to windward; between me and the gravel-heap one of the green nuts was set; and then Tamaiti (having previously bared his feet, for he had come in canvas shoes, which tortured him) joined me within the magic circle, hollowed out the top of the gravel-heap, built his fire in the bottom, and applied a match: it was one of Bryant and May's. The flame was slow to catch, and the irreverent sorcerer filled in the time with talk of foreign places—of London, and "companies," and how much money they had; of San Francisco, and the nefarious fogs, "all the same smoke," which had been so nearly the occasion of his death. I tried vainly to lead him to the matter in hand. "Everybody make medicine," he said lightly. And when I asked him if he were himself a good practitioner—"No savvy," he replied, more lightly still. At length the leaves burst in a flame, which he continued to feed; a thick, light smoke blew in my face, and the flames streamed

Digitized by Google

against and scorched my clothes. He in the meanwhile addressed, or affected to address, the evil spirit, his lips moving fast, but without sound; at the same time he waved in the air and twice struck me on the breast with his green spray. So soon as the leaves were consumed the ashes were buried, the green spray was imbedded in the gravel, and the ceremony was at an end.

A reader of the *Arabian Nights* felt quite at home. Here was the suffumigation; here was the muttering wizard; here was the desert place to which Aladdin was decoyed by the false uncle. But they manage these things better in fiction. The effect was marred by the levity of the magician, entertaining his patient with small talk like an affable dentist, and by the incongruous presence of Mr. Osbourne with a camera. As for my cold, it was neither better nor worse.

I was now handed over to Terutak', the leading practitioner or medical baronet of Apemama. His place is on the lagoon side of the island, hard by the palace. A rail of light wood, some two feet high, encloses an oblong piece of gravel like the king's Pray Place; in the midst is a green tree; below, a stone table bears a pair of boxes covered with a fine mat; and in front of these an offering of food, a cocoa-nut, a piece of taro or a fish, is placed daily. On two sides the enclosure is lined with maniap's; and one of our party, who had been there to sketch, had remarked a daily concourse of people and an extraordinary num-

Digitized by Google

ber of sick children; for this is in fact the infirmary of Apemama. The doctor and myself entered the sacred place alone; the boxes and the mat were displaced; and I was enthroned in their stead upon the stone, facing once more to the east. For a while the sorcerer remained unseen behind me, making passes in the air with a branch of palm. Then he struck lightly on the brim of my straw hat; and this blow he continued to repeat at intervals, sometimes brushing instead my arm and shoulder. I have had people try to mesmerise me a dozen times, and never with the least result. But at the first tap—on a quarter no more vital than my hat brim, and from nothing more virtuous than a switch of palm wielded by a man I could not even see—sleep rushed upon me like an armed man. My sinews fainted, my eyes closed, my brain hummed, with drowsiness. I resisted—at first instinctively, then with a sudden flurry of despair, in the end successfully: if that were indeed success which enabled me to scramble to my feet, to stumble home somnambulous, to cast myself at once upon my bed, and sink at once into a dreamless stupor. When I awoke my cold was gone. So I leave a matter that I do not understand.

Meanwhile my appetite for curiosities (not usually very keen) had been strangely whetted by the sacred boxes. They were of pandanus wood, oblong in shape, with an effect of pillaring along the sides like straw work, lightly fringed

Digitized by Google

with hair or fibre and standing on four legs. The outside was neat as a toy; the inside a mystery I was resolved to penetrate. But there was a lion in the path. I might not approach Terutak', since I had promised to buy nothing in the island; I dared not have recourse to the king, for I had already received from him more gifts than I knew how to repay. In this dilemma (the schooner being at last returned) we hit on a device. Captain Reid came forward in my stead, professed an unbridled passion for the boxes, and asked and obtained leave to bargain for them with the wizard. That same afternoon the captain and I made haste to the infirmary, entered the enclosure, raised the mat, and had begun to examine the boxes at our leisure, when Terutak's wife bounced out of one of the nigh houses, fell upon us, swept up the treasures, and was gone. There was never a more absolute surprise. She came, she took, she vanished, we had not a guess whither; and we remained, with foolish looks and laughter, on the empty field. Such was the fit prologue of our memorable bargaining.

Presently Terutak' came, bringing Tamaiti along with him, both smiling; and we four squatted without the rail. In the three maniap's of the infirmary a certain audience was gathered: the family of a sick child under treatment, the king's sister playing cards, a pretty girl, who swore I was the image of her father; in all perhaps a score. Terutak's wife had returned (even

Digitized by Google

as she had vanished) unseen, and now sat, breathless and watchful, by her husband's side. Perhaps some rumour of our quest had gone abroad, or perhaps we had given the alert by our unseemly freedom: certain, at least, that in the faces of all present expectation and alarm were mingled.

Captain Reid announced, without preface or disguise, that I was come to purchase; Terutak', with sudden gravity, refused to sell. He was pressed; he persisted. It was explained we only wanted one: no matter, two were necessary for the healing of the sick. He was rallied, he was reasoned with: in vain. He sat there, serious and still, and refused. All this was only a preliminary skirmish; hitherto no sum of money had been mentioned; but now the captain brought his great guns to bear. He named a pound, then two, then three. Out of the maniap's one person after another came to join the group, some with mere excitement, others with consternation in their faces. The pretty girl crept to my side; it was then that—surely with the most artless flattery—she informed me of my likeness to her father. Tamaiti the infidel sat with hanging head and every mark of dejection. Terutak' streamed with sweat, his eye was glazed, his face wore a painful rictus, his chest heaved like that of one spent with running. The man must have been by nature covetous; and I doubt if ever I saw moral agony more tragically displayed. His

Digitized by Google

wife by his side passionately encouraged his resistance.

And now came the charge of the old guard. The captain, making a skip, named the surprising figure of five pounds. At the word the maniap's were emptied. The king's sister flung down her cards and came to the front to listen, a cloud on her brow. The pretty girl beat her breast and cried with wearisome iteration that if the box were hers I should have it. Terutak's wife was beside herself with pious fear, her face discomposed, her voice (which scarce ceased from warning and encouragement) shrill as a whistle. Even Terutak' lost that image-like immobility which he had hitherto maintained. He rocked on his mat, threw up his closed knees alternately, and struck himself on the breast after the manner of dancers. But he came gold out of the furnace; and with what voice was left him continued to reject the bribe.

And now came a timely interjection. "Money will not heal the sick," observed the king's sister sententiously; and as soon as I heard the remark translated my eyes were unsealed, and I began to blush for my employment. Here was a sick child, and I sought, in the view of its parents, to remove the medicine-box. Here was the priest of a religion, and I (a heathen millionaire) was corrupting him to sacrilege. Here was a greedy man, torn in twain betwixt greed and conscience; and I sat by and relished, and lustfully renewed

Digitized by Google

his torments. *Ave, Cæsar!* Smothered in a corner, dormant but not dead, we have all the one touch of nature: an infant passion for the sand and blood of the arena. So I brought to an end my first and last experience of the joys of the millionaire, and departed amid silent awe. Nowhere else can I expect to stir the depths of human nature by an offer of five pounds; nowhere else, even at the expense of millions, could I hope to see the evil of riches stand so legibly exposed. Of all the bystanders, none but the king's sister retained any memory of the gravity and danger of the thing in hand. Their eyes glowed, the girl beat her breast, in senseless animal excitement. Nothing was offered them; they stood neither to gain nor to lose; at the mere name and wind of these great sums Satan possessed them.

From this singular interview I went straight to the palace; found the king; confessed what I had been doing; begged him, in my name, to compliment Terutak' on his virtue, and to have a similar box made for me against the return of the schooner. Tembinok', Rubam, and one of the Daily Papers—him we used to call "the Facetiæ Column"—laboured for a while of some idea, which was at last intelligibly delivered. They feared I thought the box would cure me; whereas, without the wizard, it was useless; and when I was threatened with another cold I should do better to rely on pain-killer. I explained I

Digitized by Google

merely wished to keep it in my "outch" as a thing made in Apemama; and these honest men were much relieved.

Late the same evening, my wife, crossing the isle to windward, was aware of singing in the bush. Nothing is more common in that hour and place than the jubilant carol of the toddy-cutter, swinging high overhead, beholding below him the narrow ribbon of the isle, the surrounding field of ocean, and the fires of the sunset. But this was of a graver character, and seemed to proceed from the ground-level. Advancing a little in the thicket, Mrs. Stevenson saw a clear space, a fine mat spread in the midst, and on the mat a wreath of white flowers and one of the devil-work boxes. A woman—whom we guess to have been Mrs. Terutak'—sat in front, now drooping over the box like a mother over a cradle, now lifting her face and directing her song to heaven. A passing toddy-cutter told my wife that she was praying. Probably she did not so much pray as deprecate; and perhaps even the ceremony was one of disenchantment. For the box was already doomed; it was to pass from its green medicine-tree, reverend precinct, and devout attendants; to be handled by the profane; to cross three seas; to come to land under the foolscap of St. Paul's; to be domesticated within hail of Lillie Bridge; there to be dusted by the British housemaid, and to take perhaps the roar of London for the voice of the outer

Digitized by Google

sea along the reef. Before even we had finished dinner Chench had begun his journey, and one of the newspapers had already placed the box upon my table as the gift of Tembinok'.

I made haste to the palace, thanked the king, but offered to restore the box, for I could not bear that the sick of the island should be made to suffer. I was amazed by his reply. Terutak', it appeared, had still three or four in reserve against an accident; and his reluctance, and the dread painted at first on every face, was not in the least occasioned by the prospect of medical destitution, but by the immediate divinity of Chench. How much more did I respect the king's command, which had been able to extort in a moment and for nothing a sacrilegious favour that I had in vain solicited with millions! But now I had a difficult task in front of me; it was not in my view that Terutak' should suffer by his virtue; and I must persuade the king to share my opinion, to let me enrich one of his subjects, and (what was yet more delicate) to pay for my present. Nothing shows the king in a more becoming light than the fact that I succeeded. He demurred at the principle; he exclaimed, when he heard it, at the sum. "Plenty money!" cried he, with contemptuous displeasure. But his resistance was never serious; and when he had blown off his ill-humour—"A' right," said he. "You give him. Mo' betta."

Armed with this permission, I made straight

Digitized by Google

for the infirmary. The night was now come, cool, dark, and starry. On a mat, hard by a clear fire of wood and coco-shell, Terutak' lay beside his wife. Both were smiling; the agony was over, the king's command had reconciled (I must suppose) their agitating scruples; and I was bidden to sit by them and share the circulating pipe. I was a little moved myself when I placed five gold sovereigns in the wizard's hand; but there was no sign of emotion in Terutak' as he returned them, pointed to the palace, and named Tembinok'. It was a changed scene when I had managed to explain. Terutak', long, dour Scots fisherman as he was, expressed his satisfaction within bounds; but the wife beamed; and there was an old gentleman present—her father, I suppose—who seemed nigh translated. His eyes stood out of his head; "*Kaupoi, Kaupoi*—rich, rich!" ran on his lips like a refrain; and he could not meet my eye but what he gurgled into foolish laughter.

I might now go home, leaving that fire-lit family party gloating over their new millions, and consider my strange day. I had tried and rewarded the virtue of Terutak'. I had played the millionaire, had behaved abominably, and then in some degree repaired my thoughtlessness. And now I had my box, and could open it and look within. It contained a miniature sleeping-mat and a white shell. Tamaiti, interrogated next day as to the shell, explained it was not ex-

Digitized by Google

actly Chench, but a cell, or body, which he would at times inhabit. Asked why there was a sleeping-mat, he retorted indignantly, "Why have you mats?" And this was the sceptical Tamaiti! But island scepticism is never deeper than the lips.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

THE KING OF APEMAMA

THUS all things on the island, even the priests of the gods, obey the word of Tembinok'. He can give and take, and slay, and allay the scruples of the conscientious, and do all things (apparently) but interfere in the cookery of a turtle. "I got power" is his favourite word; it interlards his conversation; the thought haunts him and is ever fresh; and when he has asked and meditates of foreign countries, he looks up with a smile and reminds you, "*I* got *power*." Nor is his delight only in the possession, but in the exercise. He rejoices in the crooked and violent paths of kingship like a strong man to run a race, or like an artist in his art. To feel, to use his power, to embellish his island and the picture of the island life after a private ideal, to milk the island vigorously, to extend his singular museum —these employ delightfully the sum of his abilities. I never saw a man more patently in the right trade.

It would be natural to suppose this monarchy inherited intact through generations. And so

Digitized by Google

far from that, it is a thing of yesterday. I was already a boy at school while Apemama was yet republican, ruled by a noisy council of Old Men, and torn with incurable feuds. And Tembinok' is no Bourbon; rather the son of a Napoleon. Of course he is well-born. No man need aspire high in the isles of the Pacific unless his pedigree be long and in the upper regions mythical. And our king counts cousinship with most of the high families in the archipelago, and traces his descent to a shark and a heroic woman. Directed by an oracle, she swam beyond sight of land to meet her revolting paramour, and received at sea the seed of a predestined family. "I think lie," is the king's emphatic commentary; yet he is proud of the legend. From this illustrious beginning the fortunes of the race must have declined; and Teñkoruti, the grandfather of Tembinok', was the chief of a village at the north end of the island. Kuria and Aranuka were yet independent; Apemama itself the arena of devastating feuds. Through this perturbed period of history the figure of Teñkoruti stalks memorable. In war he was swift and bloody; several towns fell to his spear, and the inhabitants were butchered to a man. In civil life his arrogance was unheard of. When the council of Old Men was summoned, he went to the Speak House, delivered his mind, and left without waiting to be answered. Wisdom had spoken: let others opine according to their folly.

Digitized by Google

He was feared and hated, and this was his pleasure. He was no poet; he cared not for arts or knowledge. "My gran'patha one thing savvy, savvy pight," observed the king. In some lull of their own disputes the Old Men of Apemama adventured on the conquest of Apemama; and this unlicked Caius Marcius was elected general of the united troops. Success attended him; the islands were reduced, and Teñkoruti returned to his own government, glorious and detested. He died about 1860, in the seventieth year of his age and the full odour of unpopularity. He was tall and lean, says his grandson, looked extremely old, and "walked all the same young man." The same observer gave me a significant detail. The survivors of that rough epoch were all defaced with spearmarks; there was none on the body of this skilful fighter. "I see old man, no got a spear," said the king.

Teñkoruti left two sons, Tembaitake and Tembinatake. Tembaitake, our king's father, was short, middling stout, a poet, a good genealogist, and something of a fighter; it seems he took himself seriously, and was perhaps scarce conscious that he was in all things the creature and nursling of his brother. There was no shadow of dispute between the pair: the greater man filled with alacrity and content the second place; held the breach in war, and all the portfolios in the time of peace; and, when his brother rated him, listened in silence, looking on the ground. Like

Digitized by Google

Teñkoruti, he was tall and lean and a swift walker—a rare trait in the islands. He possessed every accomplishment. He knew sorcery, he was the best genealogist of his day, he was a poet, he could dance and make canoes and armour; and the famous mast of Apemama, which ran one joint higher than the mainmast of a full-rigged ship, was of his conception and design. But these were avocations, and the man's trade was war. "When my uncle go make wa', he laugh," said Tembinok'. He forbade the use of field fortification, that protractor of native hostilities; his men must fight in the open, and win or be beaten out of hand; his own activity inspired his followers; and the swiftness of his blows beat down, in one lifetime, the resistance of three islands. He made his brother sovereign, he left his nephew absolute. "My uncle make all smooth," said Tembinok'. "I mo' king than my patha: I got power," he said, with formidable relish.

Such is the portrait of the uncle drawn by the nephew. I can set beside it another by a different artist, who has often—I may say always—delighted me with his romantic taste in narrative, but not always—and I may say not often—persuaded me of his exactitude. I have already denied myself the use of so much excellent matter from the same source, that I begin to think it time to reward good resolution; and his account of Tembinatake agrees so well with the

Digitized by Google

king's, that it may very well be (what I hope it is) the record of a fact, and not (what I suspect) the pleasing exercise of an imagination more than sailorly. A., for so I had perhaps better call him, was walking up the island after dusk, when he came on a lighted village of some size, was directed to the chief's house, and asked leave to rest and smoke a pipe. "You will sit down, and smoke a pipe, and wash, and eat, and sleep," replied the chief, "and to-morrow you will go again." Food was brought, prayers were held (for this was in the brief day of Christianity), and the chief himself prayed with eloquence and seeming sincerity. All evening A. sat and admired the man by the firelight. He was six feet high, lean, with the appearance of many years, and an extraordinary air of breeding and command. "He looked like a man who would kill you laughing," said A., in singular echo of one of the king's expressions. And again: "I had been reading the Musketeer books, and he reminded me of Aramis." Such is the portrait of Tembinatake, drawn by an expert romancer.

We had heard many tales of "my patha"; never a word of my uncle till two days before we left. As the time approached for our departure Tembinok' became greatly changed; a softer, a more melancholy, and, in particular, a more confidential man appeared in his stead. To my wife he contrived laboriously to explain that

Digitized by Google

though he knew he must lose his father in the course of nature, he had not minded nor realised it till the moment came; and that now he was to lose us he repeated the experience. We showed fireworks one evening on the terrace. It was a heavy business; the sense of separation was in all our minds, and the talk languished. The king was specially affected, sat disconsolate on his mat, and often sighed. Of a sudden one of the wives stepped forth from a cluster, came and kissed him in silence, and silently went again. It was just such a caress as we might give to a disconsolate child, and the king received it with a child's simplicity. Presently after we said good-night and withdrew; but Tembinok' detained Mr. Osbourne, patting the mat by his side and saying: "Sit down. I feel bad, I like talk." Osbourne sat down by him. "You like some beer?" said he; and one of the wives produced a bottle. The king did not partake, but sat sighing and smoking a meerschaum pipe. "I very sorry you go," he said at last. "Miss Stlevens he good man, woman he good man, boy he good man; all good man. Woman he smart all the same man. My woman" (glancing towards his wives) "he good woman, no very smart. I think Miss Stlevens he big chiep all the same cap'n man-o'-wa'. I think Miss Stlevens he rich man all the same me. All go schoona. I very sorry. My patha he go, my uncle he go, my cutcheons he go, Miss Stlevens he go: all go.

Digitized by Google

You no see king cry before. King all the same man: feel bad, he cry. I very sorry."

In the morning it was the common topic in the village that the king had wept. To me he said: "Last night I no can 'peak: too much here," laying his hand upon his bosom. "Now you go away all the same my pamily. My brothers, my uncle go away. All the same." This was said with a dejection almost passionate. And it was the first time I had heard him name his uncle, or indeed employ the word. The same day he sent me a present of two corselets, made in the island fashion of plaited fibre, heavy and strong. One had been worn by Teñkoruti, one by Tembaitake; and the gift being gratefully received, he sent me, on the return of his messengers, a third—that of Tembinatake. My curiosity was roused; I begged for information as to the three wearers; and the king entered with gusto into the details already given. Here was a strange thing, that he should have talked so much of his family, and not once mentioned that relative of whom he was plainly the most proud. Nay, more: he had hitherto boasted of his father; thenceforth he had little to say of him; and the qualities for which he had praised him in the past were now attributed where they were due —to the uncle. A confusion might be natural enough among islanders, who call all the sons of their grandfather by the common name of father. But this was not the case with Tembinok'. Now

Digitized by Google

the ice was broken the word uncle was perpetually in his mouth; he who had been so ready to confound was now careful to distinguish; and the father sank gradually into a self-complacent ordinary man, while the uncle rose to his true stature as the hero and founder of the race.

The more I heard and the more I considered, the more this mystery of Tembinok's behaviour puzzled and attracted me. And the explanation, when it came, was one to strike the imagination of a dramatist. Tembinok' had two brothers. One, detected in private trading, was banished, then forgiven, lives to this day in the island, and is the father of the heir-apparent, Paul. The other fell beyond forgiveness. I have heard it was a love affair with one of the king's wives, and the thing is highly possible in that romantic archipelago. War was attempted to be levied; but Tembinok' was too swift for the rebels, and the guilty brother escaped in a canoe. He did not go alone. Tembinatake had a hand in the rebellion, and the man who had gained a kingdom for a weakling brother was banished by that brother's son. The fugitives came to shore in other islands, but Tembinok' remains to this day ignorant of their fate.

So far history. And now a moment for conjecture. Tembinok' confused habitually, not only the attributes and merits of his father and his uncle, but their diverse personal appearance. Before he had even spoken, or thought to speak,

Digitized by Google

of Tembinatake, he had told me often of a tall, lean father, skilled in war, and his own schoolmaster in genealogy and island arts. How if both were fathers, one natural, one adoptive? How if the heir of Tembaitake, like the heir of Tembinok' himself, were not a son, but an adopted nephew? How if the founder of the monarchy, while he worked for his brother, worked at the same time for the child of his loins? How if on the death of Tembaitake, the two stronger natures, father and son, king and kingmaker, clashed, and Tembinok', when he drove out his uncle, drove out the author of his days? Here is at least a tragedy four-square.

The king took us on board in his own gig, dressed for the occasion in the naval uniform. He had little to say, he refused refreshments, shook us briefly by the hand, and went ashore again. That night the palm-tops of Apemama had dipped behind the sea, and the schooner sailed solitary under the stars.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

A FOOTNOTE TO HISTORY

EIGHT YEARS OF TROUBLE IN SAMOA

—arma
Nondum in expiatis uncta cruoribus,
Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ,
Tractas et incedis per ignes
Suppositos cineri doloso.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

PREFACE

AN affair which might be deemed worthy of a note of a few lines in any general history has been here expanded to the size of a volume or large pamphlet. The smallness of the scale and the singularity of the manners and events and many of the characters, considered, it is hoped that, in spite of its outlandish subject, the sketch may find readers. It has been a task of difficulty. Speed was essential, or it might come too late to be of any service to a distracted country. Truth, in the midst of conflicting rumours and in the dearth of printed material, was often hard to ascertain, and since most of those engaged were of my personal acquaintance, it was often more than delicate to express. I must certainly have erred often and much; it is not for want of trouble taken nor of an impartial temper. And if my plain speaking shall cost me any of the friends that I still count, I shall be sorry, but I need not be ashamed.

In one particular the spelling of Samoan words has been altered; and the characteristic nasal *n*

Digitized by Google

of the language written throughout *ng* instead of *g*. Thus I put Pango-Pango, instead of Pago-Pago: the sound being that of soft *ng* in English; as in *singer*, not as in *finger*.

R. L. S.

VAILIMA,
UPOLU,
SAMOA.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

		PAGE
PREFACE		447
CHAPTER		
I.	THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: NATIVE	451
II.	THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: FOREIGN	465
III.	THE SORROWS OF LAUPEPA (1883 *to September*, 1887)	482
IV.	BRANDEIS (*September*, 1887, *to August*, 1888)	519
V.	THE BATTLE OF MATAUTU (*September*, 1888)	543
VI.	LAST EXPLOITS OF BECKER (*September-November*, 1888)	561
VII.	THE SAMOAN CAMPS (*November*, 1888)	589
VIII.	AFFAIRS OF LAULII AND FANGALII (*November-December*, 1888)	601
IX.	"FUROR CONSULARIS" (*December*, 1888, *to March*, 1889)	624
X.	THE HURRICANE (*March*, 1889)	644
XI.	LAUPEPA AND MATAAFA (1889–1892)	663

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: NATIVE

THE story I have to tell is still going on as I write; the characters are alive and active; it is a piece of contemporary history in the most exact sense. And yet, for all its actuality and the part played in it by mails and telegraphs and iron war-ships, the ideas and the manners of the native actors date back before the Roman Empire. They are Christians, church-goers, singers of hymns at family worship, hardy cricketers; their books are printed in London by Spottiswoode, Trübner, or the Tract Society; but in most other points they are the contemporaries of our tattooed ancestors who drove their chariots on the wrong side of the Roman wall. We have passed the feudal system; they are not yet clear of the patriarchal. We are in the thick of the age of finance; they are in a period of communism. And this makes them hard to understand.

To us, with our feudal ideas, Samoa has the

Digitized by Google

first appearance of a land of despotism. An elaborate courtliness marks the race alone among Polynesians; terms of ceremony fly thick as oaths on board a ship; commoners my-lord each other when they meet—and urchins as they play marbles. And for the real noble a whole private dialect is set apart. The common names for an axe, for blood, for bamboo, a bamboo knife, a pig, food, entrails, and an oven are taboo in his presence, as the common names for a bug and for many offices and members of the body are taboo in the drawing-rooms of English ladies. Special words are set apart for his leg, his face, his hair, his belly, his eyelids, his son, his daughter, his wife, his wife's pregnancy, his wife's adultery, adultery with his wife, his dwelling, his spear, his comb, his sleep, his dreams, his anger, the mutual anger of several chiefs, his food, his pleasure in eating, the food and eating of his pigeons, his ulcers, his cough, his sickness, his recovery, his death, his being carried on a bier, the exhumation of his bones and his skull after death. To address these demigods is quite a branch of knowledge, and he who goes to visit a high chief does well to make sure of the competence of his interpreter. To complete the picture, the same word signifies the watching of a virgin and the warding of a chief; and the same word means to cherish a chief and to fondle a favourite child.

Men like us, full of memories of feudalism,

Digitized by Google

hear of a man so addressed, so flattered, and we leap at once to the conclusion that he is hereditary and absolute. Hereditary he is; born of a great family, he must always be a man of mark; but yet his office is elective and (in a weak sense) is held on good behaviour. Compare the case of a Highland chief: born one of the great ones of his clan, he was sometimes appointed its chief officer and conventional father; was loved and respected and served and fed and died for implicitly, if he gave loyalty a chance; and yet, if he sufficiently outraged clan sentiment, was liable to deposition. As to authority, the parallel is not so close. Doubtless the Samoan chief, if he be popular, wields a great influence; but it is limited. Important matters are debated in a fono, or native parliament, with its feasting and parade, its endless speeches and polite genealogical allusions. Debated, I say—not decided; for even a small minority will often strike a clan or a province impotent. In the midst of these ineffective councils the chief sits usually silent: a kind of a gagged audience for village orators. And the deliverance of the fono seems (for the moment) to be final. The absolute chiefs of Tahiti and Hawaii were addressed as plain John and Thomas; the chiefs of Samoa are surfeited with lip-honour, but the seat and extent of their actual authority is hard to find.

It is so in the members of the state, and worse in the belly. The idea of a sovereign pervades

Digitized by Google

the air. The name we have; the thing we are not so sure of. And the process of election to the chief power is a mystery. Certain provinces have in their gift certain high titles, or *names* as they are called. These can only be attributed to the descendants of particular lines. Once granted, each *name* conveys at once the principality (whatever that be worth) of the province which bestows it, and counts as one suffrage towards the general sovereignty of Samoa. To be indubitable king, they say—or some of them say, I find few in perfect harmony—a man should resume five of these names in his own person. But the case is purely hypothetical; local jealousy forbids its occurrence. There are rival provinces, far more concerned in the prosecution of their rivalry than in the choice of a right man for king. If one of these shall have bestowed its name on competitor A, it will be the signal and the sufficient reason for the other to bestow its name on competitor B or C. The majority of Savaii and that of Aana are thus in perennial opposition. Nor is this all. In 1881, Laupepa, the present king, held the three names of Malietoa, Natoaitele, and Tamasoalii; Tamasese held that of Tuiaana; and Mataafa that of Tuiatua. Laupepa had thus a majority of suffrages; he held perhaps as high a proportion as can be hoped in these distracted islands; and he counted among the number the preponderant name of Malietoa. Here, if ever, was an election. Here,

Digitized by Google

if a king were at all possible, was the king. And yet the natives were not satisfied. Laupepa was crowned, March 19th; and next month, the provinces of Aana and Atua met in joint parliament, and elected their own two princes, Tamasese and Mataafa, to an alternate monarchy, Tamasese taking the first trick of two years. War was imminent when the consuls interfered, and any war were preferable to the terms of the peace which they procured. By the Lackawanna treaty, Laupepa was confirmed king and Tamasese set by his side in the nondescript office of vice-king. The compromise was not, I am told, without precedent; but it lacked all appearance of success. To the constitution of Samoa, which was already all wheels and no horses, the consuls had added a fifth wheel. In addition to the old conundrum, "Who is the king?" they had supplied a new one, "What is the vice-king?"

Two royal lines; some cloudy idea of alternation between the two; an electorate in which the vote of each province is immediately effectual, as regards itself, so that every candidate who attains one *name* becomes a perpetual and dangerous competitor for the other four; such are a few of the more trenchant absurdities. Many argue that the whole idea of sovereignty is modern and imported; but it seems impossible that anything so foolish should have been suddenly devised, and the constitution bears on its front the marks of dotage.

Digitized by Google

But the king, once elected and nominated, what does he become? It may be said he remains precisely as he was. Election to one of the five names is significant; it brings not only dignity but power, and the holder is secure, from that moment, of a certain following in war. But I cannot find that the further step of election to the kingship implies anything worth mention. The successful candidate is now the *Tupu o Samoa*, much good may it do him! He can so sign himself on proclamations, which it does not follow that any one will heed. He can summon parliaments; it does not follow they will assemble. If he be too flagrantly disobeyed, he can go to war. But so he could before, when he was only the chief of certain provinces. His own provinces will support him, the provinces of his rivals will take the field upon the other part; just as before. In so far as he is the holder of any of the five *names*, in short, he is a man to be reckoned with; in so far as he is king of Samoa, I cannot find but what the president of a college debating society is a far more formidable officer. And unfortunately, although the credit side of the account proves thus imaginary, the debit side is actual and heavy. For he is now set up to be the mark of consuls; he will be badgered to raise taxes, to make roads, to punish crime, to quell rebellion: and how he is to do it is not asked.

If I am in the least right in my presentation of this obscure matter, no one need be surprised

Digitized by Google

to hear that the land is full of war and rumours of war. Scarce a year goes by but what some province is in arms, or sits sulky and menacing, holding parliaments, disregarding the king's proclamations and planting food in the bush, the first step of military preparation. The religious sentiment of the people is indeed for peace at any price; no pastor can bear arms; and even the layman who does so is denied the sacraments. In the last war the college of Mālua, where the picked youth are prepared for the ministry, lost but a single student; the rest, in the bosom of a bleeding country and deaf to the voices of vanity and honour, peacefully pursued their studies. But if the church looks askance on war, the warrior in no extremity of need or passion forgets his consideration for the church. The houses and gardens of her ministers stand safe in the midst of armies; a way is reserved for themselves along the beach, where they may be seen in their white kilts and jackets openly passing the lines, while not a hundred yards behind the skirmishers will be exchanging the useless volleys of barbaric warfare. Women are also respected; they are not fired upon; and they are suffered to pass between the hostile camps, exchanging gossip, spreading rumour, and divulging to either army the secret councils of the other. This is plainly no savage war; it has all the punctilio of the barbarian, and all his parade; feats precede battles, fine dresses and songs decorate and enliven the

Digitized by Google

field; and the young soldier comes to camp burning (on the one hand) to distinguish himself by acts of valour, and (on the other) to display his acquaintance with field etiquette. Thus after Mataafa became involved in hostilities against the Germans, and had another code to observe besides his own, he was always asking his white advisers if "things were done correctly." Let us try to be as wise as Mataafa, and to conceive that etiquette and morals differ in one country and another. We shall be the less surprised to find Samoan war defaced with some unpalatable customs. The childish destruction of fruit trees in an enemy's country cripples the resources of Samoa; and the habit of head hunting not only revolts foreigners, but has begun to exercise the minds of the natives themselves. Soon after the German heads were taken, Mr. Carne, Wesleyan missionary, had occasion to visit Mataafa's camp, and spoke of the practice with abhorrence. "Misi Kāne," said one chief, "we have just been puzzling ourselves to guess where that custom came from. But, Misi, is it not so that when David killed Goliath, he cut off his head and carried it before the king?"

With the civil life of the inhabitants we have far less to do; and yet even here a word of preparation is inevitable. They are easy, merry, and pleasure loving; the gayest, though by far from either the most capable or the most beautiful of Polynesians. Fine dress is a passion, and

Digitized by Google

makes a Samoan festival a thing of beauty. Song is almost ceaseless. The boatman sings at the oar, the family at evening worship, the girls at night in the guest house, sometimes the workman at his toil. No occasion is too small for the poets and musicians; a death, a visit, the day's news, the day's pleasantry, will be set to rhyme and harmony. Even half-grown girls, the occasion arising, fashion words and train choruses of children for its celebration. Song, as with all Pacific islanders, goes hand in hand with the dance, and both shade into the drama. Some of the performances are indecent and ugly, some only dull; others are pretty, funny, and attractive. Games are popular. Cricket matches, where a hundred played upon a side, endured at times for weeks, and ate up the country like the presence of an army. Fishing, the daily bath, flirtation; courtship, which is gone upon by proxy; conversation, which is largely political; and the delights of public oratory; fill in the long hours.

But the special delight of the Samoan is the *malanga*. When people form a party and go from village to village, junketing and gossipping, they are said to go on a *malanga*. Their songs have announced their approach ere they arrive; the guest house is prepared for their reception; the virgins of the village attend to prepare the kava bowl and entertain them with the dance; time flies in the enjoyment of every pleas-

Digitized by Google

ure which an islander conceives; and when the *malanga* sets forth, the same welcome and the same joys expect them beyond the next cape, where the nearest village nestles in its grove of palms. To the visitors it is all golden; for the hosts, it has another side. In one or two words of the language the fact peeps slyly out. The same word (*afemoeima*) expresses "a long call" and "to come as a calamity"; the same word (*lesolosolou*) signifies "to have no intermission of pain" and "to have no cessation, as in the arrival of visitors"; and *soua*, used of epidemics, bears the sense of being overcome as with "fire, flood, or visitors." But the gem of the dictionary is the verb *alovao*, which illustrates its pages like a humorous wood-cut. It is used in the sense of "to avoid visitors," but it means literally "hide in the wood." So, by the sure hand of popular speech, we have the picture of the house deserted, the *malanga* disappointed, and the host that should have been, quaking in the bush.

We are thus brought to the beginning of a series of traits of manners, highly curious in themselves and essential to an understanding of the war. In Samoa authority sits on the one hand entranced; on the other, property stands bound in the midst of chartered marauders. What property exists is vested in the family, not in the individual; and of the loose communism in which a family dwells, the dictionary may yet again help us to some idea. I find a string of

Digitized by Google

verbs with the following senses: to deal leniently with, as in helping oneself from a family plantation; to give away without consulting other members of the family; to go to strangers for help instead of to relatives; to take from relatives without permission; to steal from relatives; to have plantations robbed by relatives. The ideal of conduct in the family, and some of its depravations, appear here very plainly. The man who (in a native word of praise) is *mata-ainga*, a race-regarder, has his hand always open to his kindred; the man who is not (in a native term of contempt) *noa*, knows always where to turn in any pinch of want or extremity of laziness. Beggary within the family—and by the less self-respecting, without it—has thus grown into a custom and a scourge, and the dictionary teems with evidence of its abuse. Special words signify the begging of food, of uncooked food, of fish, of pigs, of pigs for travellers, of pigs for stock, of taro, of taro-tops, of taro-tops for planting, of tools, of flyhooks, of implements for netting pigeons, and of mats. It is true the beggar was supposed in time to make a return, somewhat as by the Roman contract of *mutuum*. But the obligation was only moral; it could not be, or was not, enforced; as a matter of fact, it was disregarded. The language had recently to borrow from the Tahitians a word for debt; while by a significant excidence, it possessed a native expression for the failure to pay—"to omit to make

Digitized by Google

a return for property begged." Conceive now the position of the householder besieged by harpies, and all defence denied him by the laws of honour. The sacramental gesture of refusal, his last and single resource, was supposed to signify "my house is destitute." Until that point was reached, in other words, the conduct prescribed for a Samoan was to give and to continue giving. But it does not appear he was at all expected to give with a good grace. The dictionary is well stocked with expressions standing ready, like missiles, to be discharged upon the locusts—"troop of shame-faced ones," "you draw in your head like a tern," "you make your voice small like a whistle pipe," "you beg like one delirious"; and the verb *pongitai*, "to look cross," is equipped with the pregnant rider, "as at the sight of beggars."

This insolence of beggars and the weakness of proprietors can only be illustrated by examples. We have a girl in our service to whom we had given some finery, that she might wait at table, and (at her own request) some warm clothing against the cold mornings of the bush. She went on a visit to her family, and returned in an old tablecloth, her whole wardrobe having been divided out among relatives in the course of twenty-four hours. A pastor in the province of Atua, being a handy, busy man, bought a boat for a hundred dollars, fifty of which he paid down. Presently after, relatives came to him

Digitized by Google

upon a visit and took a fancy to his new possession. "We have long been wanting a boat," said they. "Give us this one." So, when the visit was done, they departed in the boat. The pastor, meanwhile, travelled into Savaii the best way he could, sold a parcel of land, and begged mats among his other relatives, to pay the remainder of the price of the boat, which was no longer his. You might think this was enough; but some months later, the harpies, having broken a thwart, brought back the boat to be repaired and repainted by the original owner.

Such customs, it might be argued, being double-edged, will ultimately right themselves. But it is otherwise in practice. Such folk as the pastor's harpy relatives will generally have a boat, and will never have paid for it; such men as the pastor may have sometimes paid for a boat, but they will never have one. It is there as it is with us at home; the measure of the abuse of either system is the blackness of the individual heart. The same man, who would drive his poor relatives from his own door in England, would besiege in Samoa the doors of the rich; and the essence of the dishonesty in either case is to pursue one's own advantage and to be indifferent to the losses of one's neighbour. But the particular drawback of the Polynesian system is to depress and stagger industry. To work more is there only to be more pillaged; to save is impossible. The family has then made a good day

Digitized by Google

of it when all are filled and nothing remains over for the crew of freebooters; and the injustice of the system begins to be recognised even in Samoa. One native is said to have amassed a certain fortune; two clever lads have individually expressed to us their discontent with a system which taxes industry to pamper idleness; and I hear that in one village of Savaii a law has been passed forbidding gifts under the penalty of a sharp fine.

Under this economic regimen, the unpopularity of taxes, which strike all at the same time, which expose the industrious to a perfect siege of mendicancy, and the lazy to be actually condemned to a day's labour, may be imagined without words. It is more important to note the concurrent relaxation of all sense of property. From applying for help to kinsmen who are scarce permitted to refuse, it is but a step to taking from them (in the dictionary phrase) "without permission"; from that to theft at large is but a hair's-breadth.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

THE ELEMENTS OF DISCORD: FOREIGN

THE huge majority of Samoans, like other god-fearing folk in other countries, are perfectly content with their own manners. And upon one condition, it is plain they might enjoy themselves far beyond the average of man. Seated in islands very rich in food, the idleness of the many idle would scarce matter; and the provinces might continue to bestow their names among rival pretenders, and fall into war and enjoy that a while, and drop into peace and enjoy that, in a manner highly to be envied. But the condition—that they should be let alone—is now no longer possible. More than a hundred years ago, and following closely on the heels of Cook, an irregular invasion of adventurers began to swarm about the isles of the Pacific. The seven sleepers of Polynesia stand, still but half aroused, in the midst of the century of competition. And the island races, comparable to a shopful of crockery launched upon the stream of time, now

Digitized by Google

fall to make their desperate voyage among pots of brass and adamant.

Apia, the port and mart, is the seat of the political sickness of Samoa. At the foot of a peaked woody mountain, the coast makes a deep indent, roughly semi-circular. In front the barrier reef is broken by the fresh water of the streams; if the swell be from the north, it enters almost without diminution; and the war-ships roll dizzily at their moorings, and along the fringeing coral which follows the configuration of the beach, the surf breaks with a continuous uproar. In wild weather, as the world knows, the roads are untenable. Along the whole shore, which is everywhere green and level and overlooked by inland mountain-tops, the town lies drawn out in strings and clusters. The western horn is Mulinuu, the eastern, Matautu; and from one to the other of these extremes, I ask the reader to walk. He will find more of the history of Samoa spread before his eyes in that excursion, than has yet been collected in the blue-books or the white-books of the world. Mulinuu (where the walk is to begin) is a flat, wind-swept promontory, planted with palms, backed against a swamp of mangroves, and occupied by a rather miserable village. The reader is informed that this is the proper residence of the Samoan kings; he will be the more surprised to observe a board set up, and to read that this historic village is the property of the German firm. But these boards, which are

Digitized by Google

among the commonest features of the landscape, may be rather taken to imply that the claim has been disputed. A little farther east he skirts the stores, offices, and barracks of the firm itself. Thence he will pass through Matafele, the one really town-like portion of this long string of villages, by German bars and stores and the German consulate; and reach the Catholic mission and cathedral standing by the mouth of a small river. The bridge which crosses here (bridge of Mulivai) is a frontier; behind is Matafele; beyond, Apia proper; behind, Germans are supreme; beyond, with but few exceptions, all is Anglo-Saxon. Here the reader will go forward past the stores of Mr. Moors (American) and Messrs. MacArthur (English); past the English mission, the office of the English newspaper, the English church, and the old American consulate, till he reaches the mouth of a larger river, the Vaisingano. Beyond, in Matautu, his way takes him in the shade of many trees and by scattered dwellings, and presently brings him beside a great range of offices, the place and the monument of a German who fought the German firm during his life. His house (now he is dead) remains pointed like a discharged cannon at the citadel of his old enemies. Fitly enough, it is at present leased and occupied by Englishmen. A little farther, and the reader gains the eastern flanking angle of the bay, where stands the pilot-house and signal post, and whence he can see, on

Digitized by Google

the line of the main coast of the island, the British and the new American consulates.

The course of his walk will have been enlivened by a considerable to and fro of pleasure and business. He will have encountered many varieties of whites—sailors, merchants, clerks, priests, Protestant missionaries in their pith helmets, and the nondescript hangers-on of any island beach. And the sailors are sometimes in considerable force; but not the residents. He will think at times there are more signboards than men to own them. It may chance it is a full day in the harbour; he will then have seen all manner of ships, from men-of-war and deep-sea packets to the labour-vessels of the German firm and the cockboat island schooner; and if he be of an arithmetical turn, he may calculate that there are more whites afloat in Apia bay than whites ashore in the whole Archipelago. On the other hand, he will have encountered all ranks of natives, chiefs and pastors in their scrupulous white clothes; perhaps the king himself, attended by guards in uniform; smiling policemen with their pewter stars; girls, women, crowds of cheerful children. And he will have asked himself with some surprise where these reside. Here and there, in the back yards of European establishments, he may have had a glimpse of a native house elbowed in a corner; but since he left Mulinuu, none on the beach where islanders prefer to live, scarce one on the line of street.

Digitized by Google

The handful of whites have everything; the natives walk in a foreign town. A year ago, on a knoll behind a bar-room, he might have observed a native house guarded by sentries and flown over by the standard of Samoa. He would then have been told it was the seat of government, driven (as I have to relate) over the Mulivai and from beyond the German town into the Anglo-Saxon. To-day, he will learn it has been carted back again to its old quarters. And he will think it significant that the king of the islands should be thus shuttled to and fro in his chief city at the nod of aliens. And then he will observe a feature more significant still: a house with some concourse of affairs, policemen and idlers hanging by, a man at a bank-counter overhauling manifests, perhaps a trial proceeding in the front verandah, or perhaps the council breaking up in knots after a stormy sitting. And he will remember that he is in the *Eleele Sa*, the "Forbidden Soil" or Neutral Territory of the treaties; that the magistrate whom he has just seen trying native criminals is no officer of the native king's; and that this, the only port and place of business in the kingdom, collects and administers its own revenue for its own behoof by the hands of white councillors and under the supervision of white consuls. Let him go farther afield. He will find the roads almost everywhere to cease or to be made impassable by native pig-fences, bridges to be quite unknown, and

Digitized by Google

houses of the whites to become at once a rare exception. Set aside the German plantations, and the frontier is sharp. At the boundary of the *Eleele Sa*, Europe ends, Samoa begins. Here, then, is a singular state of affairs: all the money, luxury, and business of kingdom centred in one place; that place excepted from the native government and administered by whites for whites; and the whites themselves holding it not in common but in hostile camps, so that it lies between them like a bone between two dogs, each growling, each clutching his own end.

Should Apia ever choose a coat of arms, I have a motto ready: "Enter Rumour painted full of tongues." The majority of the natives do extremely little; the majority of the whites are merchants with some four mails in the month, shopkeepers with some ten or twenty customers a day, and gossip is the common resource of all. The town hums to the day's news, and the bars are crowded with amateur politicians. Some are office-seekers, and earwig king and consul, and compass the fall of officials, with an eye to salary. Some are humourists, delighted with the pleasure of faction for itself. "I never saw so good a place as this Apia," said one of these; "you can be in a new conspiracy every day!" Many, on the other hand, are sincerely concerned for the future of the country. The quarters are so close and the scale is so small, that perhaps not any one can be trusted always to preserve his tem-

Digitized by Google

per. Every one tells everything he knows; that is our country sickness. Nearly every one has been betrayed at times, and told 'a trifle more; the way our sickness takes the predisposed. And the news flies, and the tongues wag, and fists are shaken. Pot boil and cauldron bubble!

Within the memory of man, the white people of Apia lay in the worst squalor of degradation. They are now unspeakably improved, both men and women. To-day they must be called a more than fairly respectable population, and a much more than fairly intelligent. The whole would probably not fill the ranks of even an English half-battalion, yet there are a surprising number above the average in sense, knowledge, and manners. The trouble (for Samoa) is that they are all here after a livelihood. Some are sharp practitioners, some are famous (justly or not) for foul play in business. Tales fly. One merchant warns you against his neighbour; the neighbour on the first occasion is found to return the compliment: each with a good circumstantial story to the proof. There is so much copra in the islands, and no more; a man's share of it is his share of bread; and commerce, like politics, is here narrowed to a focus, shows its ugly side, and becomes as personal as fisticuffs. Close at their elbows, in all this contention, stands the native looking on. Like a child, his true analogue, he observes, apprehends, misapprehends,

Digitized by Google

and is usually silent. As in a child, a considerable intemperance of speech is accompanied by some power of secrecy. News he publishes; his thoughts have often to be dug for. He looks on at the rude career of the dollar hunt, and wonders. He sees these men rolling in a luxury beyond the ambition of native kings; he hears them accused by each other of the meanest trickery; he knows some of them to be guilty; and what is he to think? He is strongly conscious of his own position as the common milk-cow; and what is he to do? "Surely these white men on the beach are not great chiefs?" is a common question, perhaps asked with some design of flattering the person questioned. And one, stung by the last incident into an unusual flow of English, remarked to me: "I begin to be weary of white men on the beach."

But the true centre of trouble, the head of the boil of which Samoa languishes, is the German firm. From the conditions of business, a great island house must ever be an inheritance of care: and it chances that the greatest still afoot has its chief seat in Apia bay, and has sunk the main part of its capital in the island of Upolu. When its founder, John Cæsar Godeffroy, went bankrupt over Russian paper and Westphalian iron, his most considerable asset was found to be the South Sea business. This passed (I understand) through the hands of Baring Brothers in London, and is now run by a company rejoicing in the

Digitized by Google

Gargantuan name of the *Deutsche Handels und Plantagen Gesellschaft für Süd-See Inseln zu Hamburg*. This piece of literature is (in practice) shortened to the D. H. and P. G., the Old Firm, the German Firm, the Firm, and (among humourists) the Long Handle Firm. Even from the deck of an approaching ship, the island is seen to bear its signature—zones of cultivation showing in a more vivid tint of green on the dark vest of forest. The total area in use is near ten thousand acres. Hedges of fragrant lime enclose, broad avenues intersect them. You shall walk for hours in parks of palm-tree alleys, regular, like soldiers on parade; in the recesses of the hills you may stumble on a mill-house, toiling and trembling there, fathoms deep in superincumbent forest. On the carpet of clean sward, troops of horses and herds of handsome cattle may be seen to browse; and to one accustomed to the rough luxuriance of the tropics, the appearance is of fairyland. The managers, many of them German sea-captains, are enthusiastic in their new employment. Experiment is continually afoot: coffee and cacao, both of excellent quality, are among the more recent outputs; and from one plantation quantities of pineapples are sent at a particular season to the Sydney markets. A hundred and fifty thousand pounds of English money, perhaps two hundred thousand, lie sunk in these magnificent estates. In estimating the expense of maintenance, quite a fleet

Digitized by Google

of ships must be remembered, and a strong staff of captains, supercargoes, overseers, and clerks. These last mess together at a liberal board; the wages are high, and the staff is inspired with a strong and pleasing sentiment of loyalty to their employers.

Seven or eight hundred imported men and women toil for the company on contracts of three or of five years, and at a hypothetical wage of a few dollars in the month. I am now on a burning question: the labour traffic; and I shall ask permission in this place only to touch it with the tongs. Suffice it to say that in Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Hawaii it has been either suppressed or placed under close public supervision. In Samoa, where it still flourishes, there is no regulation of which the public receives any evidence; and the dirty linen of the firm, if there be any dirty, and if it be ever washed at all, is washed in private. This is unfortunate, if Germans would believe it. But they have no idea of publicity, keep their business to themselves, rather affect to "move in a mysterious way," and are naturally incensed by criticisms, which they consider hypocritical, from men who would import "labour" for themselves if they could afford it, and would probably maltreat them if they dared. It is said the whip is very busy on some of the plantations; it is said that punitive extra-labour, by which the thrall's term of service is extended, has grown to be an abuse; and

Digitized by Google

it is complained that, even where that term is out, much irregularity occurs in the repatriation of the discharged. To all this I can say nothing, good or bad. A certain number of the thralls, many of them wild negritos from the west, have taken to the bush, harbour there in a state partly bestial, or creep into the back quarters of the town to do a day's stealthy labour under the nose of their proprietors. Twelve were arrested one morning in my own boys' kitchen. Farther in the bush, huts, small patches of cultivation, and smoking ovens, have been found by hunters. There are still three runaways in the woods of Tutuila, whither they escaped upon a raft. And the Samoans regard these dark-skinned rangers with extreme alarm; the fourth refugee in Tutuila was shot down (as I was told in that island) while carrying off the virgin of a village; and tales of cannibalism run round the country, and the natives shudder about the evening fire. For the Samoans are not cannibals, do not seem to remember any period when they were, and regard the practice with a disfavour equal to our own.

The firm is Gulliver among the Lilliputs; and it must not be forgotten that, while the small, independent traders are fighting for their own hand and inflamed with the usual jealousy against corporations, the Germans are inspired with a sense of the greatness of their affairs and interests. The thought of the money sunk, the

Digitized by Google

sight of these costly and beautiful plantations menaced yearly by the returning forest, and the responsibility of administering with one hand so many conjunct fortunes, might well nerve the manager of such a company for desperate and questionable deeds. Upon this scale, commercial sharpness has an air of patriotism; and I can imagine the man, so far from higgling over the scourge for a few Solomon islanders, prepared to oppress rival firms, overthrow inconvenient monarchs, and let loose the dogs of war. Whatever he may decide, he will not want for backing. Every clerk will be eager to be up and strike a blow; and most Germans in the group, whatever they may babble of the firm over the walnuts and the wine, will rally round the national concern at the approach of difficulty. They are so few—I am ashamed to give their number, it were to challenge contradiction—they are so few, and the amount of national capital buried at their feet is so vast, that we must not wonder if they seem oppressed with greatness and the sense of empire. Other whites take part in our babbles, while temper holds out, with a certain schoolboy entertainment. In the Germans alone, no trace of humour is to be observed, and their solemnity is accompanied by a touchiness often beyond belief. Patriotism flies in arms about a hen; and if you comment upon the colour of a Dutch umbrella, you have cast a stone against the German emperor. I give one instance, typi-

Digitized by Google

cal although extreme. One who had returned from Tutuila on the mail cutter complained of the vermin with which she is infested. He was suddenly and sharply brought to a stand. The ship of which he spoke, he was reminded, was a German ship.

John Cæsar Godeffroy himself had never visited the islands; his sons and nephews came, indeed, but scarcely to reap laurels; and the mainspring and headpiece of this great concern, until death took him, was a certain remarkable man of the name of Theodor Weber. He was of an artful and commanding character; in the smallest thing or the greatest, without fear or scruple; equally able to affect, equally ready to adopt, the most engaging politeness or the most imperious airs of domination. It was he who did most damage to rival traders; it was he who most harried the Samoans; and yet I never met any one, white or native, who did not respect his memory. All felt it was a gallant battle, and the man a great fighter; and now when he is dead, and the war seems to have gone against him, many can scarce remember, without a kind of regret, how much devotion and audacity have been spent in vain. His name still lives in the songs of Samoa. One, that I have heard, tells of *Misi Ueba* and a biscuit box—the suggesting incident being long since forgotten. Another sings plaintively how all things, land and food and property, pass progressively, as by a law of

Digitized by Google

nature, into the hands of *Misi Ueba*, and soon nothing will be left for Samoans. This is an epitaph the man would have enjoyed.

At one period of his career, Weber combined the offices of director of the firm and consul for the City of Hamburg. No question but he then drove very hard. Germans admit that the combination was unfortunate; and it was a German who procured its overthrow. Captain Zembsch superseded him with an imperial appointment, one still remembered in Samoa as "the gentleman who acted justly." There was no house to be found, and the new consul must take up his quarters at first under the same roof with Weber. On several questions, in which the firm was vitally interested, Zembsch embraced the contrary opinion. Riding one day with an Englishman in Vailele plantation, he was startled by a burst of screaming, leaped from the saddle, ran round a house, and found an overseer beating one of the thralls. He punished the overseer, and, being a kindly and perhaps not a very diplomatic man, talked high of what he felt and what he might consider it his duty to forbid or to enforce. The firm began to look askance at such a consul; and worse was behind. A number of deeds being brought to the consulate for registration, Zembsch detected certain transfers of land in which the date, the boundaries, the measure, and the consideration were all blank. He refused them with an indignation which he does not seem

Digitized by Google

to have been able to keep to himself; and whether or not by his fault, some of these unfortunate documents became public. It was plain that the relations between the two flanks of the German invasion, the diplomatic and the commercial, were strained to bursting. But Weber was a man ill to conquer. Zembsch was recalled; and from that time forth, whether through influence at home, or by the solicitations of Weber on the spot, the German consulate has shown itself very apt to play the game of the German firm. That game, we may say, was two-fold,—the first part even praiseworthy, the second at least natural. On the one part, they desired an efficient native administration, to open up the country and punish crime; they wished, on the other, to extend their own provinces and to curtail the dealings of their rivals. In the first, they had the jealous and diffident sympathy of all whites; in the second, they had all whites banded together against them for their lives and livelihoods. It was thus a game of *Beggar my Neighbour* between a large merchant and some small ones. Had it so remained, it would still have been a cut-throat quarrel. But when the consulate appeared to be concerned, when the war-ships of the German Empire were thought to fetch and carry for the firm, the rage of the independent traders broke beyond restraint. And, largely from the national touchiness and the intemperate speech of German clerks, this scram-

Digitized by Google

ble among dollar hunters assumed the appearance of an inter-racial war.

The firm, with the indomitable Weber at its head and the consulate at its back—there has been the chief enemy of Samoa. No English reader can fail to be reminded of John Company; and if the Germans appear to have been not so successful, we can only wonder that our own blunders and brutalities were less severely punished. Even on the field of Samoa, though German faults and aggressions make up the burthen of my story, they have been nowise alone. Three nations were engaged in this infinitesimal affray, and not one appears with credit. They figure but as the three ruffians, of the elder playwrights. The States have the cleanest hands, and even theirs are not immaculate. It was an ambiguous business when a private American adventurer was landed with his pieces of artillery from an American war-ship, and became prime minister to the king. It is true (even if he were ever really supported) that he was soon dropped and had soon sold himself for money to the German firm. I will leave it to the reader whether this trait dignifies or not the wretched story. And the end of it spattered the credit alike of England and the States, when this man (the premier of a friendly sovereign) was kidnapped and deported, on the requisition of an American consul, by the captain of an English war-ship. I shall have to tell, as I proceed, of villages shelled on very trifling

Digitized by Google

grounds by Germans; the like has been done of late years, though in a better quarrel, by ourselves of England. I shall have to tell how the Germans landed and shed blood at Fangalii; it was only in 1876 that we British had our own misconceived little massacre at Mulinuu. I shall have to tell how the Germans bludgeoned Malietoa with a sudden call for money; it was something of the suddenest that Sir Arthur Gordon himself, smarting under a sensible public affront, made and enforced a somewhat similar demand.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

SORROWS OF LAUPEPA

1883 to 1887

YOU ride in a German plantation and see no bush, no soul stirring; only acres of empty sward, miles of cocoa-nut alley: a desert of food. In the eyes of a Samoan the place has the attraction of a park for the holiday schoolboy, of a granary for mice. We must add the yet more lively allurement of a haunted house, for over these empty and silent miles there broods the fear of the negrito cannibal. For the Samoan besides, there is something barbaric, unhandsome, and absurd in the idea of thus growing food only to send it from the land and sell it. A man at home who should turn all Yorkshire into one wheatfield, and annually burn his harvest on the altar of Mumbo-Jumbo, might impress ourselves not much otherwise. And the firm which does these things is quite extraneous, a wen that might be excised to-morrow without loss but to itself: few natives drawing so much as day's wages; and the rest beholding in it only the occupier of their acres. The nearest villages have

Digitized by Google

suffered most; they see over the hedge the lands of their ancestors waving with useless cocopalms; and the sales were often questionable, and must still more often appear so to regretful natives, spinning and improving yarns about the evening lamp. At the worst, then, to help oneself from the plantation will seem to a Samoan very like orchard-breaking to the British schoolboy; at the best, it will be thought a gallant Robin-Hoodish readjustment of a public wrong.

And there is more behind. Not only is theft from the plantations regarded rather as a lark and peccadillo, the idea of theft in itself is not very clearly present to these communists; and as to the punishment of crime in general, a great gulph of opinion divides the natives from ourselves. Indigenous punishments were short and sharp. Death, deportation by the primitive method of setting the criminal to sea in a canoe, fines, and in Samoa itself the penalty of publicly biting a hot, ill-smelling root, comparable to a rough forfeit in a children's game—these are approved. The offender is killed, or punished and forgiven. We, on the other hand, harbour malice for a period of years: continuous shame attaches to the criminal; even when he is doing his best—even when he is submitting to the worst form of torture, regular work—he is to stand aside from life and from his family in dreadful isolation. These ideas most Polynesians have accepted in appearance, as they accept other

Digitized by Google

ideas of the whites; in practice, they reduce it to a farce. I have heard the French resident in the Marquesas in talk with the French jailer of Tai-o-hae: "*Eh bien, où sont vos prisonnières?—Je crois, mon commandant, qu'elles sont allées quelque part faire une visite.*" And the ladies would be welcome. This is to take the most savage of Polynesians; take some of the most civilised. In Honolulu, convicts labour on the highways in piebald clothing, gruesome and ridiculous; and it is a common sight to see the family of such an one troop out, about the dinner hour, wreathed with flowers and in their holiday best, to picnic with their kinsman on the public wayside. The application of these outlandish penalties, in fact, transfers the sympathy to the offender. Remember, besides, that the clan system, and that imperfect idea of justice which is its worst feature, are still lively in Samoa; that it is held the duty of a judge to favour kinsmen, of a king to protect his vassals: and the difficulty of getting a plantation thief first caught, then convicted, and last of all punished, will appear.

During the early eighties, the Germans looked upon this system with growing irritation. They might see their convict thrust in jail by the front door; they could never tell how soon he was enfranchised by the back; and they need not be the least surprised if they met him, a few days after, enjoying the delights of a *malanga*. It was a banded conspiracy, from the king and the vice-

Digitized by Google

king downward, to evade the law and deprive the Germans of their profits. In 1883, accordingly, the consul, Dr. Stuebel, extorted a convention on the subject, in terms of which Samoans convicted of offences against German subjects were to be confined in a private jail belonging to the German firm. To Dr. Stuebel it seemed simple enough: the offenders were to be effectually punished, the sufferers partially indemnified. To the Samoans, the thing appeared no less simple, but quite different: "Malietoa was selling Samoans to Misi Ueba." What else could be expected? Here was a private corporation engaged in making money; to it was delegated, upon a question of profit and loss, one of the functions of the Samoan crown; and those who make anomalies must look for comments. Public feeling ran unanimous and high. Prisoners who escaped from the private jail were not recaptured or not returned, and Malietoa hastened to build a new prison of his own, whither he conveyed, or pretended to convey, the fugitives. In October, 1885, a trenchant state paper issued from the German consulate. Twenty prisoners, the consul wrote, had now been at large for eight months from Weber's prison. It was pretended they had since then completed their term of punishment elsewhere. Dr. Stuebel did not seek to conceal his incredulity; but he took ground beyond; he declared the point irrelevant. The law was to be enforced. The men were con-

Digitized by Google

demned to a certain period in Weber's prison; they had run away; they must now be brought back and (whatever had become of them in the interval) work out the sentence. Doubtless Dr. Stuebel's demands were substantially just; but doubtless also they bore from the outside a great appearance of harshness; and when the king submitted, the murmurs of the people increased.

But Weber was not yet content. The law had to be enforced; property, or at least the property of the firm, must be respected. And during an absence of the consul's, he seems to have drawn up with his own hand, and certainly first showed to the king in his own house, a new convention. Weber here and Weber there. As an able man, he was perhaps in the right to prepare and propose conventions. As the head of a trading company, he seems far out of his part to be communicating state papers to a sovereign. The administration of justice was the colour, and I am willing to believe the purpose, of the new paper; but its effect was to depose the existing government. A council of two Germans and two Samoans were to be invested with the right to make laws and impose taxes as might be "desirable for the common interest of the Samoan government and the German residents." The provisions of this council the king and vice-king were to sign blindfold. And by a last hardship, the Germans, who received all the benefit, reserved a right to recede from the agreement on six months' notice;

Digitized by Google

the Samoans, who suffered all the loss, were bound by it in perpetuity. I can never believe that my friend Dr. Stuebel had a hand in drafting these proposals; I am only surprised he should have been a party to enforcing them, perhaps the chief error in these islands of a man who has made few. And they were enforced with a rigour that seems injudicious. The Samoans (according to their own account) were denied a copy of the document; they were certainly rated and threatened; their deliberation was treated as contumacy; two German war-ships lay in port, and it was hinted that these would shortly intervene.

Succeed in frightening a child, and he takes refuge in duplicity. "Malietoa," one of the chiefs had written, "we know well we are in bondage to the great governments." It was now thought one tyrant might be better than three, and any one preferable to Germany. On the 5th November, 1885, accordingly, Laupepa, Tamasese, and forty-eight high chiefs met in secret, and the supremacy of Samoa was secretly offered to Great Britain for the second time in history. Laupepa and Tamasese still figured as king and vice-king in the eyes of Dr. Stuebel; in their own they had secretly abdicated, were become private persons, and might do what they pleased without binding or dishonouring their country. On the morrow, accordingly, they did public humiliation in the dust before the consulate, and five days later signed the convention. The last was

Digitized by Google

done, it is claimed, upon an impulse. The humiliation, which it appeared to the Samoans so great a thing to offer, to the practical mind of Dr. Stuebel seemed a trifle to receive; and the pressure was continued and increased. Laupepa and Tamasese were both heavy, well-meaning, inconclusive men. Laupepa, educated for the ministry, still bears some marks of it in character and appearance; Tamasese was in private of an amorous and sentimental turn, but no one would have guessed it from his solemn and dull countenance. Impossible to conceive two less dashing champions for a threatened race; and there is no doubt they were reduced to the extremity of muddlement and childish fear. It was drawing towards night on the 10th, when this luckless pair and a chief of the name of Tuiatafu set out for the German consulate, still minded to temporise. As they went, they discussed their case with agitation. They could see the lights of the German war-ships as they walked—an eloquent reminder. And it was then that Tamasese proposed to sign the convention. "It will give us peace for the day," said Laupepa, "and afterwards Great Britain must decide."—"Better fight Germany than that!" cried Tuiatafu, speaking words of wisdom, and departed in anger. But the two others proceeded on their fatal errand; signed the convention, writing themselves king and vice-king, as they now believed themselves to be no longer; and with childish perfidy

Digitized by Google

took part in a scene of "reconciliation" at the German consulate.

Malietoa supposed himself betrayed by Tamasese. Consul Churchward states with precision that the document was sold by a scribe for thirty-six dollars. Twelve days later at least, November 22d, the text of the address to Great Britain came into the hands of Dr. Stuebel. The Germans may have been wrong before; they were now in the right to be angry. They had been publicly, solemnly, and elaborately fooled; the treaty and the reconciliation were both fraudulent, with the broad, farcical fraudulency of children and barbarians. This history is much from the outside; it is the digested report of eye-witnesses; it can be rarely corrected from state papers; and as to what consuls felt and thought, or what instructions they acted under, I must still be silent or proceed by guess. It is my guess that Stuebel now decided Malietoa Laupepa to be a man impossible to trust and unworthy to be dealt with. And it is certain that the business of his deposition was put in hand at once. The position of Weber, with his knowledge of things native, his prestige, and his enterprising intellect, must have always made him influential with the consul: at this juncture he was indispensable. Here was the deed to be done; here the man of action. "Mr. Weber rested not," says Laupepa. It was "like the old days of his own consulate," writes Churchward. His messengers filled the

Digitized by Google

isle; his house was thronged with chiefs and orators; he sat close over his loom, delightedly weaving the future. There was one thing requisite to the intrigue—a native pretender; and the very man, you would have said, stood waiting: Mataafa, titular of Atua, descended from both the royal lines, late joint king with Tamasese, fobbed off with nothing in the time of the Lackawanna treaty, probably mortified by the circumstance, a chief with a strong following, and in character and capacity high above the native average. Yet when Weber's spiriting was done, and the curtain rose on the set scene of the coronation, Mataafa was absent, and Tamasese stood in his place. Malietoa was to be deposed for a piece of solemn and offensive trickery, and the man selected to replace him was his sole partner and accomplice in the act. For so strange a choice, good ground must have existed; but it remains conjectural: some supposing Mataafa scratched as too independent: others that Tamasese had indeed betrayed Laupepa, and his new advancement was the price of his treachery.

So these two chiefs began to change places like the scales of a balance, one down, the other up. Tamasese raised his flag (Jan. 28th, 1886) in Leulumoenga, chief place of his own province of Aana, usurped the style of king, and began to collect and arm a force. Weber, by the admission of Stuebel, was in the market supplying

Digitized by Google

him with weapons; so were the Americans; so, but for our salutary British law, would have been the British; for wherever there is a sound of battle, there will the traders be gathered together selling arms. A little longer, and we find Tamasese visited and addressed as king and majesty by a German commodore. Meanwhile, for the unhappy Malietoa, the road led downward. He was refused a bodyguard. He was turned out of Mulinuu, the seat of his royalty, on a land claim of Weber's, fled across the Mulivai, and "had the coolness" (German expression) to hoist his flag in Apia. He was asked "in the most polite manner," says the same account —"in the most delicate manner in the world," a reader of Marryat might be tempted to amend the phrase,—to strike his flag in his own capital; and on his "refusal to accede to this request," Dr. Steubel appeared himself with ten men and an officer from the cruiser *Albatross;* a sailor climbed into the tree and brought down the flag of Samoa, which was carefully folded and sent, "in the most polite manner," to its owner. The consuls of England and the States were there (the excellent gentlemen!) to protest. Last, and yet more explicit, the German commodore who visited and be-titled Tamasese, addressed the king—we may surely say the late king—as "the High Chief Malietoa."

Had he no party, then? At that time, it is probable, he might have called some five-sev-

Digitized by Google

enths of Samoa to his standard. And yet he sat there, helpless monarch, like a fowl trussed for roasting. The blame lies with himself, because he was a helpless creature; it lies also with England and the States. Their agents on the spot preached peace (where there was no peace, and no pretence of it) with eloquence and iteration. Secretary Bayard seems to have felt a call to join personally in the solemn farce, and was at the expense of a telegram in which he assured the sinking monarch it was "for the higher interests of Samoa" he should do nothing. There was no man better at doing that; the advice came straight home, and was devoutly followed. And to be just to the great powers, something was done in Europe; a conference was called, it was agreed to send commissioners to Samoa, and the decks had to be hastily cleared against their visit. Dr. Stuebel had attached the municipality of Apia and hoisted the German war-flag over Mulinuu; the American consul (in a sudden access of good service) had flown the stars and stripes over Samoan colours; on either side these steps were solemnly retracted. The Germans expressly disowned Tamasese; and the islands fell into a period of suspense, of some twelve months' duration, during which the seat of the history was transferred to other countries and escapes my purview. Here on the spot, I select three incidents: the arrival on the scene of a new actor, the visit of the Hawaiian embassy, and the

Digitized by Google

riot on the emperor's birthday.' The rest shall be silence; only it must be borne in view that Tamasese all the while continued to strengthen himself in Leulumoenga, and Laupepa sat inactive listening to the song of consuls.

Captain Brandeis. The new actor was Brandeis, a Bavarian captain of artillery, of a romantic and adventurous character. He had served with credit in war; but soon wearied of garrison life, resigned his battery, came to the States, found employment as a civil engineer, visited Cuba, took a sub-contract on the Panama Canal, caught the fever, and came (for the sake of the sea-voyage) to Australia. He had that natural love for the tropics which lies so often latent in persons of a northern birth; difficulty and danger attracted him; and when he was picked out for secret duty, to be the hand of Germany in Samoa, there is no doubt but he accepted the post with exhilaration. It is doubtful if a better choice could have been made. He had courage, integrity, ideas of his own, and loved the employment, the people, and the place. Yet there was a fly in the ointment. The double error of unnecessary stealth and of the immixture of a trading company in political affairs, has vitiated and in the end defeated, much German policy. And Brandeis was introduced to the islands as a clerk, and sent down to Leulumoenga (where he was soon drilling the troops and fortifying the posi-

Digitized by Google

tion of the rebel king) as an agent of the German firm. What this mystification cost in the end I shall tell in another place; and even in the begining, it deceived no one. Brandeis is a man of notable personal appearance; he looks the part allotted him; and the military clerk was soon the centre of observation and rumour. Malietoa wrote and complained of his presence to Becker, who had succeeded Dr. Stuebel in the consulate. Becker replied, "I have nothing to do with the gentleman Brandeis. Be it well known that the gentleman Brandeis has no appointment in a military character, but resides peaceably assisting the government of Leulumoenga in their work, for Brandeis is a quiet, sensible gentleman." And then he promised to send the vice-consul to "get information of the captain's doings": surely supererogation of deceit.

The Hawaiian Embassy. The prime minister of the Hawaiian kingdom was, at this period, an adventurer of the name of Gibson. He claimed, on the strength of a romantic story, to be the heir of a great English house. He had played a part in a revolt in Java, had languished in Dutch fetters, and had risen to be a trusted agent of Brigham Young, the Utah president. It was in this character of a Mormon emissary that he first came to the islands of Hawaii, where he collected a large sum of money for the Church of the Latter Day Saints. At a given moment,

Digitized by Google

he dropped his saintship and appeared as a Christian and the owner of a part of the island of Lanai. The steps of the transformation are obscure; they seem, at least, to have been ill-received at Salt Lake; and there is evidence to the effect that he was followed to the island by Mormon assassins. His first attempt on politics was made under the auspices of what is called the missionary party, and the canvass conducted largely (it is said with tears) on the platform at prayer meetings. It resulted in defeat. Without any decency of delay he changed his colours, abjured the errors of reform, and, with the support of the Catholics, rose to the chief power. In a very brief interval he had thus run through the gamut of religions in the South Seas. It does not appear that he was any more particular in politics, but he was careful to consult the character and prejudices of the late king, Kalakaua. That amiable, far from unaccomplished, but too convivial sovereign, had a continued use for money: Gibson was observant to keep him well supplied. Kalakaua (one of the most theoretical of men) was filled with visionary schemes for the protection and development of the Polynesian race: Gibson fell in step with him; it is even thought he may have shared in his illusions. The king and minister at least conceived between them a scheme of island confederation—the most obvious fault of which was that it came too late—and armed and fitted out the cruiser *Kai-*

Digitized by Google

miloa, nest-egg of the future navy of Hawaii. Samoa, the most important group still independent and one immediately threatened with aggression, was chosen for the scene of action. The Hon. John E. Bush, a half-caste Hawaiian, sailed (December, 1887) for Apia as minister plenipotentiary, accompanied by a secretary of legation, Henry F. Poor; and, as soon as she was ready for sea, the war-ship followed in support. The expedition was futile in its course, almost tragic in result. The *Kaimiloa* was from the first a scene of disaster and dilapidation: the stores were sold; the crew revolted; for a great part of a night, she was in the hands of mutineers, and the secretary lay bound upon the deck. The mission, installing itself at first with extravagance in Matautu, was helped at last out of the island by the advances of a private citizen. And they returned from dreams of Polynesian independence to find their own city in the hands of a clique of white shopkeepers, and the great Gibson once again in jail. Yet the farce had not been quite without effect. It had encouraged the natives for the moment, and it seems to have ruffled permanently the temper of the Germans. So might a fly irritate Cæsar.

The arrival of a mission from Hawaii would scarce affect the composure of the courts of Europe. But in the eyes of Polynesians the little kingdom occupies a place apart. It is there alone that men of their race enjoy most of

Digitized by Google

the advantages and all the pomp of independence; news of Hawaii and descriptions of Honolulu are grateful topics in all parts of the South Seas; and there is no better introduction than a photograph in which the bearer shall be represented in company with Kalakaua. Laupepa was, besides, sunk to the point at which an unfortunate begins to clutch at straws, and he received the mission with delight. Letters were exchanged between him and Kalakaua; a deed of confederation was signed, 17th February, 1887, and the signature celebrated in the new house of the Hawaiian embassy with some original ceremonies. Malietoa came, attended by his ministry, several hundred chiefs, two guards, and six policemen. Laupepa, always decent, withdrew at an early hour; by those that remained, all decency appears to have been forgotten; high chiefs were seen to dance; and day found the house carpeted with slumbering grandees, who must be roused, doctored with coffee, and sent home. As a first chapter in the history of Polynesian Confederation, it was hardly cheering, and Laupepa remarked to one of the embassy, with equal dignity and sense: "If you have come here to teach my people to drink, I wish you had stayed away."

The Germans looked on from the first with natural irritation that a power of the powerlessness of Hawaii should thus profit by its undeniable footing in the family of nations, and send embas-

Digitized by Google

sies, and make believe to have a navy, and bark and snap at the heels of the great German Empire. But Becker could not prevent the hunted Laupepa from taking refuge in any hole that offered, and he could afford to smile at the fantastic orgie in the embassy. It was another matter when the Hawaiians approached the intractable Mataafa, sitting still in his Atua government like Achilles in his tent, helping neither side, and (as the Germans suspected) keeping the eggs warm for himself. When the *Kaimiloa* steamed out of Apia on this visit, the German war-ship *Adler* followed at her heels; and Mataafa was no sooner set down with the embassy than he was summoned and ordered on board by two German officers. The step is one of those triumphs of temper which can only be admired. Mataafa is entertaining the plenipotentiary of a sovereign power in treaty with his own king, and the captain of a German corvette orders him to quit his guests.

But there was worse to come. I gather that Tamasese was at the time in the sulks. He had doubtless been promised prompt aid and prompt success; he had seen himself surreptitiously helped, privately ordered about, and publicly disowned; and he was still the king of nothing more than his own province and already the second in command of Captain Brandeis. With the adhesion of some part of his native cabinet and behind the back of his white minis-

Digitized by Google

ter, he found means to communicate with the Hawaiians. A passage on the *Kaimiloa*, a pension, and a home in Honolulu were the bribes proposed; and he seems to have been tempted. A day was set for a secret interview. Poor, the Hawaiian secretary, and J. D. Strong, an American painter attached to the embassy in the surprising quality of "Government Artist," landed with a Samoan boat's-crew in Aana; and while the secretary hid himself, according to agreement, in the outlying home of an English settler, the artist (ostensibly bent on photography) entered the headquarters of the rebel king. It was a great day in Leulumoenga; three hundred recruits had come in, a feast was cooking; and the photographer, in view of the native love of being photographed, was made entirely welcome. But beneath the friendly surface all were on the alert. The secret had leaked out: Weber beheld his plans threatened in the root; Brandeis trembled for the possession of his slave and sovereign; and the German vice-consul, Mr. Sonnenschein, had been sent or summoned to the scene of danger.

It was after dark, prayers had been said and the hymns sung through all the village, and Strong and the Germans sat together on the mats in the house of Tamasese, when the events began. Strong speaks German freely, a fact which he had not disclosed, and he was scarce more amused than embarrassed to be able to follow all the evening the dissension and the

Digitized by Google

changing counsels of his neighbours. First the king himself was missing, and there was a false alarm that he had escaped and was already closeted with Poor. Next came certain intelligence that some of the ministry had run the blockade, and were on their way to the house of the English settler. Thereupon, in spite of some protests from Tamasese, who tried to defend the independence of his cabinet, Brandeis gathered a posse of warriors, marched out of the village, brought back the fugitives, and clapped them in the corrugated iron shanty which served as jail. Along with these he seems to have seized Billy Coe, interpreter to the Hawaiians; and Poor, seeing his conspiracy public, burst with his boat's-crew into the town, made his way to the house of the native prime minister, and demanded Coe's release. Brandeis hastened to the spot, with Strong at his heels; and the two principals being both incensed, and Strong seriously alarmed for his friend's safety, there began among them a scene of great intemperance. At one point, when Strong suddenly disclosed his acquaintance with German, it attained a high style of comedy; at another, when a pistol was most foolishly drawn, it bordered on drama; and it may be said to have ended in a mixed genus, when Poor was finally packed into the corrugated iron jail along with the forfeited ministers. Meanwhile the captain of his boat, Siteoni, of whom I shall have to tell again, had cleverly withdrawn the boat's-

Digitized by Google

crew at an early stage of the quarrel. Among the population beyond Tamasese's marches, he collected a body of armed men, returned before dawn to Leulumoenga, demolished the corrugated iron jail, and liberated the Hawaiian secretary and the rump of the rebel cabinet. No opposition was shown; and doubtless the rescue was connived at by Brandeis, who had gained his point. Poor had the face to complain the next day to Becker; but to compete with Becker in effrontery was labour lost. "You have been repeatedly warned, Mr. Poor, not to expose yourself among these savages," said he.

Not long after, the presence of the *Kaimiloa* was made a *casus belli* by the Germans; and the rough-and-tumble embassy withdrew, on borrowed money, to find their own government in hot water to the neck.

The Emperor's Birthday. It is possible, and it is alleged, that the Germans entered into the conference with hope. But it is certain they were resolved to remain prepared for either fate. And I take the liberty of believing that Laupepa was not forgiven his duplicity; that, during this interval, he stood marked like a tree for felling and that his conduct was daily scrutinised for further pretexts of offence. On the evening of the emperor's birthday, March 22, 1887, certain Germans were congregated in a public bar. The season and the place considered, it is scarce cynical to assume they had been drinking; nor,

Digitized by Google

so much being granted, can it be thought exorbitant to suppose them possibly in fault for the squabble that took place. A squabble, I say; but I am willing to call it a riot. And this was the new fault of Laupepa; this it is that was described by a German commodore as "the trampling upon by Malietoa of the German emperor." I pass the rhetoric by to examine the point of liability. Four natives were brought to trial for this horrid fact: not before a native judge, but the German magistrate of the tripartite municipality of Apia. One was acquitted, one condemned for theft, and two for assault. On appeal, not to Malietoa, but the three consuls, the case was by a majority of two to one returned to the magistrate and (as far as I can learn) was then allowed to drop. Consul Becker himself laid the chief blame on one of the policemen of the municipality, a half white of the name of Scanlon. Him he sought to have discharged, but was again baffled by his brother consuls. Where, in all this, are we to find a corner of responsibility for the king of Samoa? Scanlon, the alleged author of the outrage, was a half white; as Becker was to learn to his cost, he claimed to be an American subject; and he was not even in the king's employment. Apia, the scene of the outrage, was outside the king's jurisdiction by treaty; by the choice of Germany, he was not so much as allowed to fly his flag there. And the denial of justice (if justice were denied)

Digitized by Google

rested with the consuls of Britain and the States.

But when a dog is to be beaten, any stick will serve. In the meanwhile, on the proposition of Mr. Bayard, the Washington conference on Samoan affairs was adjourned till autumn, so that "the ministers of Germany and Great Britain might submit the protocols to their respective governments."—"You propose that the conference is to adjourn and not be broken up?" asked Sir Lionel West.—"To adjourn for the reasons stated," replied Bayard. This was on July 26th; and, twenty-nine days later, by Wednesday the 24th of August, Germany had practically seized Samoa. For this flagrant breach of faith one excuse is openly alleged; another whispered. It is openly alleged that Bayard had shown himself impracticable; it is whispered that the Hawaiian embassy was an expression of American intrigue, and that the Germans only did as they were done by. The sufficiency of these excuses may be left to the discretion of the reader. But however excused, the breach of faith was public and express; it must have been deliberately predetermined; and it was resented in the States as a deliberate insult.

By the middle of August, 1887, there were five sail of German war-ships in Apia bay; the *Bismarck* of 3000 tons displacement; the *Carola*, the *Sophie*, and the *Olga*, all considerable ships; and the beautiful *Adler*, which lies there to this day,

Digitized by Google

kanted on her beam, dismantled, scarlet with rust, the day showing through her ribs. They waited inactive, as a burglar waits till the patrol goes by. And on the 23d, when the mail had left for Sydney, when the eyes of the world were withdrawn, and Samoa plunged again for a period of weeks into her original island obscurity, Becker opened his guns. The policy was too cunning to seem dignified; it gave to conduct which would otherwise have seemed bold and even brutally straightforward, the appearance of a timid ambuscade; and helped to shake men's reliance on the word of Germany. On the day named, an ultimatum reached Malietoa at Afenga, whither he had retired months before to avoid friction. A fine of one thousand dollars and an *ifo*, or public humiliation, were demanded for the affair of the emperor's birthday. Twelve thousand dollars were to be "paid quickly" for thefts from German plantations in the course of the last four years. "It is my opinion that there is nothing just or correct in Samoa while you are at the head of the government," concluded Becker. "I shall be at Afenga in the morning of tomorrow, Wednesday, at 11 A. M." The blow fell on Laupepa (in his own expression) "out of the bush"; the dilatory fellow had seen things hang over so long, he had perhaps begun to suppose they might hang over for ever; and here was ruin at the door. He rode at once to Apia, and summoned his chiefs. The council lasted all night

Digitized by Google

long. Many voices were for defiance. But Laupepa had grown inured to a policy of procrastination; and the answer ultimately drawn only begged for delay till Saturday, the 27th. So soon as it was signed, the king took horse and fled in the early morning to Afenga; the council hastily dispersed; and only three chiefs, Selu, Seumanu, and Le Mamea, remained by the government building, tremulously expectant of the result.

By seven, the letter was received. By 7:30, Becker arrived in person, inquired for Laupepa, was evasively answered, and declared war on the spot. Before eight, the Germans (seven hundred men and six guns) came ashore and seized and hoisted German colours on the government building. The three chiefs had made good haste to escape; but a considerable booty was made of government papers, firearms, and some seventeen thousand cartridges. Then followed a scene which long rankled in the minds of the white inhabitants, when the German marines raided the town in search of Malietoa, burst into private houses, and were accused (I am willing to believe on slender grounds) of violence to private persons.

On the morrow, the 25th, one of the German war-ships, which had been despatched to Leulumoenga over-night, re-entered the bay, flying the Tamasese colours at the fore. The new king was given a royal salute of twenty-one guns,

Digitized by Google

marched through the town by the commodore and a German guard of honour, and established on Mulinuu with two or three hundred warriors. Becker announced his recognition to the other consuls. These replied by proclaiming Malietoa, and in the usual mealy-mouthed manner advised Samoans to do nothing. On the 27th, martial law was declared; and on the 1st September, the German squadron dispersed about the group, bearing along with them the proclamations of the new king. Tamasese was now a great man, to have five iron war-ships for his post-runners. But the moment was critical. The revolution had to be explained, the chiefs persuaded to assemble at a fono summoned for the 15th; and the ships carried not only a store of printed documents, but a squad of Tamasese orators upon their round.

Such was the German *coup d'état*. They had declared war with a squadron of five ships upon a single man; that man, late king of the group, was in hiding on the mountains; and their own nominee, backed by German guns and bayonets, sat in his stead on Mulinuu.

One of the first acts of Malietoa, on fleeing to the bush, was to send for Mataafa twice: "I am alone in the bush; if you do not come quickly, you will find me bound." It is to be understood the men were near kinsmen, and had (if they had nothing else) a common jealousy. At the urgent cry, Mataafa set forth from Falesá, and

Digitized by Google

came to Mulinuu to Tamasese. "What is this that you and the German commodore have decided on doing?" he inquired.—"I am going to obey the German consul," replied Tamasese, "whose wish it is that I should be the king and that all Samoa should assemble here."—"Do not pursue in wrath against Malietoa," said Mataafa; "but try to bring about a compromise, and form a united government."—"Very well," said Tamasese, "leave it to me, and I will try." From Mulinuu, Mataafa went on board the *Bismarck*, and was graciously received. "Probably," said the commodore, "we shall bring about a reconciliation of all Samoa through you"; and then asked his visitor if he bore any affection to Malietoa. "Yes," said Mataafa.—"And to Tamasese?"—"To him also and if you desire the weal of Samoa, you will allow either him or me to bring about a reconciliation."—"If it were my will," said the commodore, "I would do as you say. But I have no will in the matter. I have instructions from the Kaiser, and I cannot go back again from what I have been sent to do."—"I thought you would be commended," said Mataafa, "if you brought about the weal of Samoa."—"I will tell you," said the commodore. "All shall go quietly. But there is one thing that must be done: Malietoa must be deposed. I will do nothing to him beyond; he will only be kept on board for a couple of months and be well treated, just as we Germans did to the French

Digitized by Google

chief [Napoleon III.] some time ago, whom we kept a while and cared for well." Becker was no less explicit: war, he told Sewall, should not cease till the Germans had custody of Malietoa and Tamasese should be recognised.

Meantime, in the Malietoa provinces, a profound impression was received. People trooped to their fugitive sovereign in the bush. Many natives in Apia brought their treasures, and stored them in the houses of white friends. The Tamasese orators were sometimes ill received. Over in Savaii, they found the village of Satupaitea deserted, save for a few lads at cricket. These they harangued, and were rewarded with ironical applause; and the proclamation, as soon as they had departed, was torn down. For this offence the village was ultimately burned by German sailors, in a very decent and orderly style, on the 3d September. This was the dinner-bell of the fono on the 15th. The threat conveyed in the terms of the summons—"If any government district does not quickly obey this direction, I will make war on that government district"—was thus commented on and reinforced. And the meeting was in consequence well attended by chiefs of all parties. They found themselves unarmed among the armed warriors of Tamasese and the marines of the German squadron, and under the guns of five strong ships. Brandeis rose; it was his first open appearance, the German firm signing its revolu-

Digitized by Google

tionary work. His words were few and uncompromising: "Great are my thanks that the chiefs and heads of families of the whole of Samoa are assembled here this day. It is strictly forbidden that any discussion should take place as to whether it is good or not that Tamasese is king of Samoa, whether at this fono or at any future fono. I place for your signature the following: '*We inform all the people of Samoa of what follows:* (1) *The government of Samoa has been assumed by King Tuiaana Tamasese.* (2) *By order of the king, it was directed that a fono should take place to-day, composed of the chiefs and heads of families, and we have obeyed the summons. We have signed our names under this, 15th September, 1887.*'" Needs must under all these guns; and the paper was signed, but not without open sullenness. The bearing of Mataafa in particular was long remembered against him by the Germans. "Do you not see the king?" said the commodore, reprovingly. "His father was no king," was the bold answer. A bolder still has been printed, but this is Mataafa's own recollection of the passage. On the next day, the chiefs were all ordered back to shake hands with Tamasese. Again they obeyed; but again their attitude was menacing, and some, it is said, audibly murmured as they gave their hands.

It is time to follow the poor Sheet of Paper (literal meaning of *Laupepa*), who was now to be blown so broadly over the face of earth. As

Digitized by Google

soon as news reached him of the declaration of war, he fled from Afenga to Tanungamanono, a hamlet in the bush, about a mile and a half behind Apia, where he lurked some days. On the 24th, Selu, his secretary, despatched to the American Consul an anxious appeal, his majesty's "cry and prayer" in behalf of "this weak people." By August 30th, the Germans had word of his lurking-place, surrounded the hamlet under cloud of night, and in the early morning burst with a force of sailors on the houses. The people fled on all sides, and were fired upon. One boy was shot in the hand, the first blood of the war. But the king was nowhere to be found; he had wandered farther, over the woody mountains, the backbone of the land, towards Siumu and Safata. Here, in a safe place, he built himself a town in the forest, where he received a continual stream of visitors and messengers. Day after day the German blue-jackets were employed in the hopeless enterprise of beating the forests for the fugitive; day after day they were suffered to pass unhurt under the guns of ambushed Samoans; day after day they returned, exhausted and disappointed, to Apia. Seumanu Tafa, high chief of Apia, was known to be in the forest with the king; his wife, Fatulia, was seized, imprisoned in the German hospital, and when it was thought her spirit was sufficiently reduced, brought up for cross-examination. The wise lady confined herself in answer to a single word.

Digitized by Google

"Is your husband near Apia?"—"Yes."—"Is he far from Apia?"—"Yes."—"Is he with king?"—"Yes."—"Are he and the king in different places?"—"Yes." Whereupon the witness was discharged. About the 10th of September, Laupepa was secretly in Apia at the American consulate with two companions. The German pickets were close set and visited by a strong patrol; and on his return, his party was observed and hailed and fired on by a sentry. They ran away on all fours in the dark, and so doing plumped upon another sentry, whom Laupepa grappled and flung in a ditch; for the Sheet of Paper, although infirm of character, is like most Samoans, of an able body. The second sentry (like the first) fired after his assailants at random in the dark; and the two shots awoke the curiosity of Apia. On the afternoon of the 16th, the day of the hand-shakings, Suatele, a high chief, despatched two boys across the island with a letter. They were most of the night upon the road; it was near three in the morning before the sentries in the camp of Malietoa beheld their lantern drawing near out of the wood; but the king was at once awakened. The news was decisive and the letter peremptory: if Malietoa did not give himself up before ten on the morrow, he was told that great sorrows must befall his country. I have not been able to draw Laupepa as a hero; but he is a man of certain virtues, which the Germans had now given him an occasion to display.

Digitized by Google

Without hesitation he sacrificed himself, penned his touching farewell to Samoa, and making more expedition than the messengers, passed early behind Apia to the banks of the Vaisingano. As he passed, he detached a messenger to Mataafa at the Catholic mission. Mataafa followed by the same road, and the pair met at the riverside and went and sat together in a house. All present were in tears. "Do not let us weep," said the talking man, Lauati. "We have no cause for shame. We do not yield to Tamasese, but to the invincible strangers." The departing king bequeathed the care of his country to Mataafa; and when the latter sought to console him with the commodore's promises, he shook his head, and declared his assurance that he was going to a life of exile and perhaps to death. About two o'clock the meeting broke up; Mataafa returned to the Catholic mission by the back of the town; and Malietoa proceeded by the beach road to the German naval hospital, where he was received (as he owns, with perfect civility) by Brandeis. About three, Becker brought him forth again. As they went to the wharf, the people wept and clung to their departing monarch. A boat carried him on board the *Bismarck*, and he vanished from his countrymen. Yet it was long rumoured that he still lay in the harbour; and so late as October 7th, a boy, who had been paddling round the *Carola*, professed to have seen and spoken with him. Here again

Digitized by Google

the needless mystery affected by the Germans bitterly disserved them. The uncertainty which thus hung over Laupepa's fate, kept his name continually in men's mouths. The words of his farewell rang in their ears: "To all Samoa: On account of my great love to my country and my great affection to all Samoa, this is the reason that I deliver up my body to the German government. That government may do as they wish to me. The reason of this is, because I do not desire that the blood of Samoa shall be spilt for me again. But I do not know what is my offence which has caused their anger to me and to my country." And then, apostrophising the different provinces: "Tuamasanga, farewell! Manono and family, farewell! So, also, Salafai, Tutuila, Aana, and Atua, farewell! If we do not again see one another in this world, pray that we may be again together above." So the sheep departed with the halo of a saint, and men thought of him as of some King Arthur snatched into Avillion.

On board the *Bismarck*, the commodore shook hands with him, told him he was to be "taken away from all the chiefs with whom he had been accustomed," and had him taken to the wardroom under guard. The next day he was sent to sea in the *Adler*. There went with him his brother Moli, one Meisake, and one Alualu, half-caste German, to interpret. He was respectfully used; he dined in the stern with the officers,

Digitized by Google

but the boys dined "near where the fire was." They came to a "newly-formed place" in Australia, where the *Albatross* was lying and a British ship, which he knew to be a man-of-war "because the officers were nicely dressed and wore epaulettes." Here he was transhipped, "in a boat with a screen," which he supposed was to conceal him from the British ship; and on board the *Albatross* was sent below and told he must stay there till they had sailed. Later, however, he was allowed to come on deck, where he found they had rigged a screen (perhaps an awning) under which he walked, looking at "the newly-formed settlement," and admiring a big house "where he was sure the governor lived." From Australia, they sailed some time, and reached an anchorage where a consul-general came on board, and where Laupepa was only allowed on deck at night. He could then see the lights of a town with wharves; he supposes Cape Town. Off the Cameroons they anchored or lay-to, far at sea, and sent a boat ashore to see (he supposes) that there was no British man-of-war. It was the next morning before the boat returned, when the *Albatross* stood in and came to anchor near another German ship. Here Alualu came to him on deck and told him this was the place. "That is an astonishing thing," said he. "I thought I was to go to Germany. I do not know what this means; I do not know what will be the end of it; my heart is troubled." Whereupon Alualu

Digitized by Google

burst into tears. A little after, Laupepa was called below to the captain and the governor. The last addressed him: "This is my own place, a good place, a warm place. My house is not yet finished, but when it is, you shall live in one of my rooms until I can make a house for you." Then he was taken ashore and brought to a tall, iron house. "This house is regulated," said the governor; "there is no fire allowed to burn in it." In one part of this house, weapons of the government were hung up; there was a passage, and on the other side of the passage, fifty criminals were chained together, two and two, by the ankles. The windows were out of reach; and there was only one door, which was opened at six in the morning and shut again at six at night. All day he had his liberty, went to the Baptist Mission, and walked about viewing the negroes, who were "like the sand on the seashore" for number. At six they were called into the house and shut in for the night without beds or lights. "Although they gave me no light," said he, with a smile, "I could see I was in a prison." Good food was given him: biscuits, "tea made with warm water," beef, etc.; all excellent. Once, in their walks, they spied a breadfruit tree bearing in the garden of an English merchant, ran back to the prison to get a shilling, and came and offered to purchase. "I am not going to sell breadfruit to you people," said the merchant; "come and take what you like." Here Malietoa interrupted

Digitized by Google

himself to say it was the only tree bearing in the Cameroons. "The governor had none, or he would have given it to me." On the passage from the Cameroons to Germany, he had great delight to see the cliffs of England. He saw "the rocks shining in the sun, and three hours later was surprised to find them sunk in the heavens." He saw also wharves and immense buildings; perhaps Dover and its castle. In Hamburg, after breakfast, Mr. Weber, who had now finally "ceased from troubling" Samoa, came on board, and carried him ashore "suitably" in a steam launch to "a large house of the government," where he stayed till noon. At noon Weber told him he was going to "the place where ships are anchored that go to Samoa," and led him to "a very magnificent house, with carriages inside and a wonderful roof of glass"; to wit, the railway station. They were benighted on the train, and then went in "something with a house, drawn by horses, which had windows and many decks"; plainly an omnibus. Here (at Bremen or Bremerhaven, I believe) they stayed some while in "a house of five hundred rooms"; then were got on board the *Nürnberg* (as they understood) for Samoa, anchored in England on a Sunday, were joined *en route* by the famous Dr. Knappe, passed through "a narrow passage where they went very slow and which was just like a river," and beheld with exhilarated curiosity that Red Sea of which they had learned so much in their Bibles.

Digitized by Google

At last, "at the hour when the fires burn red," they came to a place where was a German man-of-war. Laupepa was called, with one of the boys, on deck, when he found a German officer awaiting him, and a steam launch alongside, and was told he must now leave his brother and go elsewhere. "I cannot go like this," he cried. "You must let me see my brother and the other old men"—a term of courtesy. Knappe, who seems always to have been good-natured, revised his orders, and consented not only to an interview, but to allow Moli to continue to accompany the king. So these two were carried to the man-of-war, and sailed many a day, still supposing themselves bound for Samoa; and lo! she came to a country the like of which they had never dreamed of, and cast anchor in the great lagoon of Jaluit; and upon that narrow land the exiles were set on shore. This was the part of his captivity on which he looked back with the most bitterness. It was the last, for one thing, and he was worn down with the long suspense, and terror, and deception. He could not bear the brackish water; and though "the Germans were still good to him, and gave him beef and biscuit and tea," he suffered from the lack of vegetable food.

Such is the narrative of this simple exile. I have not sought to correct it by extraneous testimony. It is not so much the facts that are historical, as the man's attitude. No one could

Digitized by Google

hear this tale as he originally told it in my hearing—I think none can read it as here condensed and unadorned—without admiring the fairness and simplicity of the Samoan; and wondering at the want of heart—or want of humour—in so many successive civilized Germans, that they should have continued to surround this infant with the secrecy of state.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

BRANDEIS

September, '87 to August, '88

SO Tamasese was on the throne, and Brandeis behind it; and I have now to deal with their brief and luckless reign. That it was the reign of Brandeis needs not to be argued: the policy is throughout that of an able, over-hasty white, with eyes and ideas. But it should be borne in mind that he had a double task, and must first lead his sovereign, before he could begin to drive their common subjects. Meanwhile, he himself was exposed (if all tales be true) to much dictation and interference and to some "cumbrous aid," from the consulate and the firm. And to one of these aids, the suppression of the municipality, I am inclined to attribute his ultimate failure.

The white enemies of the new regimen were of two classes. In the first stood Moors and the employés of MacArthur, the two chief rivals of the firm, who saw with jealousy a clerk (or a so-called clerk) of their competitors advanced to the chief power. The second class, that of the

Digitized by Google

officials, numbered at first exactly one. Wilson, the English acting consul, is understood to have held strict orders to help Germany. Commander Leary of the *Adams*, the American captain, when he arrived, on the 16th October, and for some time after, seemed devoted to the German interest, and spent his days with a German officer, Captain Von Widersheim, who was deservedly beloved by all who knew him. There remains the American consul-general, Harold Marsh Sewall, a young man of high spirit and a generous disposition. He had obeyed the orders of his government with a grudge; and looked back on his past action with regret almost to be called repentance. From the moment of the declaration of war against Laupepa, we find him standing forth in bold, consistent, and sometimes rather captious opposition, stirring up his government at home with clear and forcible despatches, and on the spot grasping at every opportunity to thrust a stick into the German wheels. For some while, he and Moors fought their difficult battle in conjunction; in the course of which, first one, and then the other, paid a visit home to reason with the authorities at Washington; and during the consul's absence, there was found an American clerk in Apia, William Blacklock, to perform the duties of the office with remarkable ability and courage. The three names just brought together, Sewall, Moors, and Blacklock, make the head and front

Digitized by Google

of the opposition; if Tamasese fell, if Brandeis was driven forth, if the treaty of Berlin was signed, theirs is the blame or the credit.

To understand the feelings of self-reproach and bitterness with which Sewall took the field, the reader must see Laupepa's letter of farewell to the consuls of England and America. It is singular that this far from brilliant or dignified monarch, writing in the forest, in heaviness of spirit and under pressure for time, should have left behind him not only one, but two remarkable and most effective documents. The farewell to his people was touching; the farewell to the consuls, for a man of the character of Sewall, must have cut like a whip. "When the chief Tamasese and others first moved the present troubles," he wrote, "it was my wish to punish them and put an end to the rebellion; but I yielded to the advice of the British and American consuls. Assistance and protection was repeatedly promised to me and my government, if I abstained from bringing war upon my country. Relying upon these promises, I did not put down the rebellion. Now I find that war has been made upon me by the Emperor of Germany, and Tamasese has been proclaimed king of Samoa. I desire to remind you of the promises so frequently made by your government, and trust that you will so far redeem them as to cause the lives and liberties of my chiefs and people to be respected."

Sewall's immediate adversary was, of course,

Digitized by Google

Becker. I have formed an opinion of this gentleman, largely from his printed despatches, which I am at a loss to put in words. Astute, ingenious, capable, at moments almost witty with a kind of glacial wit in action, he displayed in the course of this affair every description of capacity but that which is alone useful and which springs from a knowledge of men's natures. It chanced that one of Sewall's early moves played into his hands, and he was swift to seize and to improve the advantage. The neutral territory and the tripartite municipality of Apia were eyesores to the German consulate and Brandeis. By landing Tamasese's two or three hundred warriors at Mulinuu, as Becker himself owns, they had infringed the treaties, and Sewall entered protest twice. There were two ways of escaping this dilemma: one was to withdraw the warriors; the other, by some hocus-pocus, to abrogate the neutrality. And the second had subsidiary advantages: it would restore the taxes of the richest district in the islands to the Samoan king; and it would enable them to substitute over the royal seat the flag of Germany for the new flag of Tamasese. It is true (and it was the subject of much remark) that these two could hardly be distinguished by the naked eye; but their effects were different. To seat the puppet king on German land and under German colours, so that any rebellion was constructive war on Germany, was a trick apparently invented by Becker, and which

Digitized by Google

we shall find was repeated and persevered in till the end.

Otto Martin was at this time magistrate in the municipality. The post was held in turn by the three nationalities; Martin had served far beyond his term, and should have been succeeded months before by an American. To make the change it was necessary to hold a meeting of the municipal board, consisting of the three consuls, each backed by an assessor. And for some time these meetings had been evaded or refused by the German consul. As long as it was agreed to continue Martin, Becker had attended regularly; as soon as Sewall indicated a wish for his removal, Becker tacitly suspended the municipality by refusing to appear. This policy was now the more necessary; for if the whole existence of the municipality were a check on the freedom of the new government, it was plainly less so when the power to enforce and punish lay in German hands. For some while back the Malietoa flag had been flown on the municipal building: Becker denies this; I am sorry; my information obliges me to suppose he is in error. Sewall, with post-mortem loyalty to the past, insisted that this flag should be continued. And Becker immediately made his point. He declared, justly enough, that the proposal was hostile, and argued it was impossible he should attend a meeting under a flag with which his sovereign was at war. Upon one occasion of

Digitized by Google

urgency, he was invited to meet the two other consuls at the British consulate; even this he refused; and for four months the municipality slumbered, Martin still in office. In the month of October, in consequence, the British and American ratepayers announced they would refuse to pay. Becker doubtless rubbed his hands. On Saturday, the 10th, the chief Tamaseu, a Malietoa man of substance and good character, was arrested on a charge of theft believed to be vexatious, and cast by Martin into the municipal prison. He sent to Moors, who was his tenant and owed him money at the time, for bail. Moors applied to Sewall, ranking consul. After some search, Martin was found and refused to consider bail before Monday morning. Whereupon Sewall demanded the keys from the jailer, accepted Moors's verbal recognisances, and set Tamaseu free.

Things were now at a deadlock; and Becker astonished every one by agreeing to a meeting on the 14th. It seems he knew what to expect. Writing on the 13th at least, he prophesies that the meeting will be held in vain, that the municipality must lapse, and the government of Tamasese step in. On the 14th, Sewall left his consulate in time, and walked some part of the way to the place of meeting in company with Wilson, the English pro-consul. But he had forgotten a paper and in an evil hour returned for it alone. Wilson arrived without him, and

Digitized by Google

Becker broke up the meeting for want of a quorum. There was some unedifying disputation as to whether he had waited ten or twenty minutes, whether he had been officially or unofficially informed by Wilson that Sewall was on the way, whether the statement had been made to himself or to Weber[1] in answer to a question, and whether he had heard Wilson's answer or only Weber's question: all otiose; if he heard the question, he was bound to have waited for the answer; if he heard it not, he should have put it himself; and it was the manifest truth that he rejoiced in his occasion. "Sir," he wrote to Sewall, "I have the honour to inform you that, to my regret, I am obliged to consider the municipal government to be provisionally in abeyance since you have withdrawn your consent to the continuation of Mr. Martin in his position as magistrate, and since you have refused to take part in the meeting of the municipal board agreed to for the purpose of electing a magistrate. The government of the town and municipality rests, as long as the municipality is in abeyance, with the Samoan government. The Samoan government has taken over the administration, and has applied to the commander of the imperial German squadron for assistance in the preservation of good order." This letter was not delivered until 4 P.M. By three, sailors had been landed. Already German colours flew over Tamasese's head-

[1] Brother and successor of Theodor.

Digitized by Google

quarters at Mulinuu, and German guards had occupied the hospital, the German consulate, and the municipal jail and courthouse, where they stood to arms under the flag of Tamasese. The same day Sewall wrote to protest. Receiving no reply, he issued on the morrow a proclamation bidding all Americans look to himself alone. On the 26th, he wrote again to Becker, and on the 27th received this genial reply: "Sir, your high favour of the 26th of this month, I give myself the honour of acknowledging. At the same time I acknowledge the receipt of your high favour of the 14th October in reply to my communication of the same date, which contained the information of the suspension of the arrangements for the municipal government." There the correspondence ceased. And on the 18th January came the last step of this irritating intrigue, when Tamasese appointed a judge—and the judge proved to be Martin.

Thus was the adventure of the Castle Municipal achieved by Sir Becker the chivalrous. The taxes of Apia, the jail, the police, all passed into the hands of Tamasese-Brandeis; a German was secured upon the bench; and the German flag might wave over her puppet unquestioned. But there is a law of human nature which diplomatists should be taught at school, and it seems they are not: that men can tolerate bare injustice, but not the combination of injustice and subterfuge. Hence the chequered career of

Digitized by Google

the thimble-rigger. Had the municipality been seized by open force, there might have been complaint, it would not have aroused the same lasting grudge.

This grudge was an ill gift to bring to Brandeis, who had trouble enough in front of him without. He was an alien, he was supported by the guns of alien war-ships, and he had come to do an alien's work, highly needful for Samoa, but essentially unpopular with all Samoans. The law to be enforced, causes of dispute between white and brown to be eliminated, taxes to be raised, a central power created, the country opened up, the native race taught industry; all these were detestable to the natives, and to all of these he must set his hand. The more I learn of his brief term of rule, the more I learn to admire him, and to wish we had his like.

In the face of bitter native opposition he got some roads accomplished. He set up beacons. The taxes he enforced with necessary vigour. By the 6th of January, Aua and Fangatonga districts in Tutuila, having made a difficulty, Brandeis is down at the island in a schooner, with the *Adler* at his heels, seizes the chief Maunga, fines the recalcitrant districts in three hundred dollars for expenses, and orders all to be in by April 20th, which if it is not, "not one thing will be done," he proclaimed, "but war declared against you, and the principal chiefs taken to a distant island." He forbade mortgages of

Digitized by Google

copra, a frequent source of trickery and quarrel; and to clear off those already contracted, passed a severe but salutary law. Each individual or family was first to pay off its own obligation; that settled, the free man was to pay for the indebted village, the free village for the indebted province, and one island for another. Samoa, he declared, should be free of debt within a year. Had he given it three years, and gone more gently, I believe it might have been accomplished. To make it the more possible, he sought to interdict the natives from buying cotton stuffs and to oblige them to dress (at least for the time) in their own tapa. He laid the beginnings of a royal territorial army. The first draft was in his hands drilling. But it was not so much on drill that he depended; it was his hope to kindle in these men an *esprit de corps*, which should weaken the old local jealousies and bonds, and found a central or national party in the islands. Looking far before, and with a wisdom beyond that of many merchants, he had condemned the single dependence placed on copra for the national livelihood. His recruits, even as they drilled, were taught to plant cacao. Each, his term of active service finished, should return to his own land and plant and cultivate a stipulated area. Thus, as the young men continued to pass through the army, habits of discipline and industry, a central sentiment, the principles of the new culture, and actual gardens

Digitized by Google

of cacao, should be concurrently spread over the face of the islands.

Tamasese received, including his household expenses, 1,960 dollars a year; Brandeis, 2,400. All such disproportions are regrettable, but this is not extreme: we have seen horses of a different colour since then. And the Tamaseseites, with true Samoan ostentation, offered to increase the salary of their white premier: an offer he had the wisdom and good feeling to refuse. A European chief of police received twelve hundred. There were eight head judges, one to each province, and appeal lay from the district judge to the provincial, thence to Mulinuu. From all salaries (I gather) a small monthly guarantee was withheld. The army was to cost from three to four thousand, Apia (many whites refusing to pay taxes since the suppression of the municipality) might cost three thousand more: Sir Becker's high feat of arms coming expensive (it will be noticed) even in money. The whole outlay was estimated at twenty-seven thousand; and the revenue forty thousand: a sum Samoa is well able to pay.

Such were the arrangements and some of the ideas of this strong, ardent, and sanguine man. Of criticisms upon his conduct, beyond the general consent that he was rather harsh and in too great a hurry, few are articulate. The native paper of complaints was particularly childish. Out of twenty-three counts, the first two refer

Digitized by Google

to the private character of Brandeis and Tamasese. Three complain that Samoan officials were kept in the dark as to the finances; one, of the tapa law; one, of the direct appointment of chiefs by Tamasese-Brandeis, the sort of mistake into which Europeans in the South Seas fall so readily; one, of the enforced labour of chiefs; one, of the taxes; and one, of the roads. This I may give in full from the very lame translation in the American white book. "The roads that were made were called the Government Roads; they were six fathoms wide. Their making caused much damage to Samoa's lands and what was planted on it. The Samoans cried on account of their lands which were taken high-handedly and abused. They again cried on account of the loss of what they had planted, which was now thrown away in a high-handed way, without any regard being shown or question asked of the owner of the land, or any compensation offered for the damage done. This was different with foreigners' land; in their case permission was first asked to make the roads; the foreigners were paid for any destruction made." The sting of this count was, I fancy, in the last clause. No less than six articles complain of the administration of the law; and I believe that was never satisfactory. Brandeis told me himself he was never yet satisfied with any native judge. And men say (and it seems to fit in well with his hasty and eager character) that he would legislate by word

Digitized by Google

of mouth; sometimes forget what he had said; and on the same question arising in another province, decide it perhaps otherwise. I gather, on the whole, our artillery captain was not great in law. Two articles refer to a matter I must deal with more at length, and rather from the point of view of the white residents.

The common charge against Brandeis was that of favouring the German firm. Coming as he did, this was inevitable. Weber had bought Steinberger with hard cash; that was matter of history. The present government he did not even require to buy, having founded it by his intrigues, and introduced the premier to Samoa through the doors of his own office. And the effect of the initial blunder was kept alive by the chatter of the clerks in bar-rooms, boasting themselves of the new government and prophesying annihilation to all rivals. The time of raising a tax is the harvest of the merchant; it is the time when copra will be made, and must be sold; and the intention of the German firm, first in the time of Steinberger, and again in April and May, 1888, with Brandeis, was to seize and handle the whole operation. Their chief rivals were the Messrs. MacArthur; and it seems beyond question that provincial governors more than once issued orders forbidding Samoans to take money from "the New Zealand firm." These, when they were brought to his notice, Brandeis disowned, and he is entitled to be heard. No man

Digitized by Google

can live long in Samoa and not have his honesty impugned. But the accusations against Brandeis's veracity are both few and obscure. I believe he was as straight as his sword. The governors doubtless issued these orders, but there were plenty besides Brandeis to suggest them. Every wandering clerk from the firm's office, every plantation manager, would be dinning the same story in the native ear. And here again the initial blunder hung about the neck of Brandeis, a ton's weight. The natives, as well as the whites, had seen their premier masquerading on a stool in the office; in the eyes of the natives, as well as in those of the whites, he must always have retained the mark of servitude from that ill-judged passage; and they would be inclined to look behind and above him, to the great house of *Misi Ueba*. The government was like a vista of puppets. People did not trouble with Tamasese, if they got speech with Brandeis; in the same way, they might not always trouble to ask Brandeis, if they had a hint direct from *Misi Ueba*. In only one case, though it seems to have had many developments, do I find the premier personally committed. The MacArthurs claimed the copra of Fasitotai on a district mortgage of three hundred dollars. The German firm accepted a mortgage of the whole province of Aana, claimed the copra of Fasitotai as that of a part of Aana, and were supported by the government. Here Brandeis was false to his own principle, that

Digitized by Google

personal and village debts should come before provincial. But the case occurred before the promulgation of the law, and was as a matter of fact the cause of it; so the most we can say is that he changed his mind, and changed it for the better. If the history of his government be considered—how it originated in an intrigue between the firm and the consulate, and was (for the firm's sake alone) supported by the consulate with foreign bayonets—the existence of the least doubt on the man's action must seem marvellous. We should have looked to find him playing openly and wholly into their hands; that he did not, implies great independence and much secret friction; and I believe (if the truth were known) the firm would be found to have been disgusted with the stubbornness of its intended tool, and Brandeis often impatient of the demands of his creators.

But I may seem to exaggerate the degree of white opposition. And it is true that before fate overtook the Brandeis government, it appeared to enjoy the fruits of victory in Apia; and one dissident, the unconquerable Moors, stood out alone to refuse his taxes. But the victory was in appearance only; the opposition was latent; it found vent in talk, and thus reacted on the natives; upon the least excuse, it was ready to flame forth again. And this is the more singular because some were far from out of sympathy with the native policy pursued. When I met Cap-

Digitized by Google

tain Brandeis, he was amazed at my attitude. "Whom did you find in Apia to tell you so much good of me?" he asked. I named one of my informants. "He?" he cried. "If he thought all that, why did he not help me?" I told him as well as I was able. The man was a merchant. He beheld in the government of Brandeis a government created by and for the firm who were his rivals. If Brandeis were minded to deal fairly, where was the probability that he would be allowed? If Brandeis insisted and were strong enough to prevail, what guarantee that, as soon as the government were fairly accepted, Brandeis might not be removed? Here was the attitude of the hour; and I am glad to find it clearly set forth in a despatch of Sewall's, June 18th, 1888, when he commends the law against mortgages, and goes on: "Whether the author of this law will carry out the good intentions which he professes—whether he will be allowed to do so, if he desires, against the opposition of those who placed him in power and protect him in the possession of it—may well be doubted." Brandeis had come to Apia in the firm's livery. Even while he promised neutrality in commerce, the clerks were prating a different story in the bar-rooms; and the late high feat of the knight-errant, Becker, had killed all confidence in Germans at the root. By these three impolicies, the German adventure in Samoa was defeated.

I imply that the handful of whites were the

Digitized by Google

true obstacle, not the thousands of malcontent Samoans; for had the whites frankly accepted Brandeis, the path of Germany was clear, and the end of their policy, however troublesome might be its course, was obvious. But this is not to say that the natives were content. In a sense, indeed, their opposition was continuous. There will always be opposition in Samoa when taxes are imposed; and the deportation of Malietoa stuck in men's throats. Tuiatua Mataafa refused to act under the new government from the beginning, and Tamasese usurped his place and title. As early as February, I find him signing himself "Tuiaana *Tuiatua* Tamasese," the first step on a dangerous path. Asi, like Mataafa, disclaimed his chiefship and declared himself a private person; but he was more rudely dealt with. German sailors surrounded his house in the night, burst in, and dragged the women out of the mosquito nets—an offence against Samoan manners. No Asi was to be found; but at last they were shown his fishing-lights on the reef, rowed out, took him as he was, and carried him on board a man-of-war, where he was detained some while between-decks. At last, January 16th, after a farewell interview over the ship's side with his wife, he was discharged into a ketch, and, along with two other chiefs, Maunga and Tuiletufunga, deported to the Marshalls. The blow struck fear upon all sides. Le Màmea (a very able chief) was secretly among the malcon-

Digitized by Google

tents. His family and followers murmured at his weakness; but he continued, throughout the duration of the government, to serve Brandeis with trembling. A circus coming to Apia, he seized at the pretext for escape, and asked leave to accept an engagement in the company. "I will not allow you to make a monkey of yourself," said Brandeis; and the phrase had a success throughout the islands, pungent expressions being so much admired by the natives that they cannot refrain from repeating them, even when they have been levelled at themselves. The assumption of the Atua *name* spread discontent in that province; many chiefs from thence were convicted of disaffection, and condemned to labour with their hands upon the roads—a great shock to the Samoan sense of the becoming, which was rendered the more sensible by the death of one of the number at his task. Mataafa was involved in the same trouble. His disaffected speech at a meeting of Atua chiefs was betrayed by the girls that made the kava, and the man of the future was called to Apia on safe conduct, but, after an interview, suffered to return to his lair. The peculiarly tender treatment of Mataafa must be explained by his relationship to Tamasese. Laupepa was of Malietoa blood. The hereditary retainers of the Tupua would see him exiled even with some complacency. But Mataafa was Tupua himself; and Tupua men would probably have murmured, and would per-

Digitized by Google

haps have mutinied, had he been harshly dealt with.

The native opposition, I say, was in a sense continuous. And it kept continuously growing. The sphere of Brandeis was limited to Mulinuu and the north central quarters of Opulu—practically what is shown upon the map in this volume. There the taxes were expended; in the out-districts, men paid their money and saw no return. Here the eye and hand of the dictator were ready to correct the scales of justice; in the out-districts, all things lay at the mercy of the native magistrates, and their oppressions increased with the course of time and the experience of impunity. In the spring of the year, a very intelligent observer had occasion to visit many places in the island of Savaii. "Our lives are not worth living," was the burthen of the popular complaint. "We are groaning under the oppression of these men. We would rather die than continue to endure it." On his return to Apia, he made haste to communicate his impressions to Brandeis. Brandeis replied in an epigram: "Where there has been anarchy in a country, there must be oppression for a time." But unfortunately the terms of the epigram may be reversed; and personal supervision would have been more in season than wit. The same observer who conveyed to him this warning thinks that, if Brandeis had himself visited the districts and inquired into complaints, the blow might yet

Digitized by Google

have been averted and the government saved. At last, upon a certain unconstitutional act of Tamasese, the discontent took life and fire. The act was of his own conception; the dull dog was ambitious. Brandeis declares he would not be dissuaded; perhaps his adviser did not seriously try, perhaps did not dream that in that welter of contradictions, the Samoan constitution, any one point would be considered sacred. I have told how Tamasese assumed the title of Tuiatua. In August, 1888, a year after his installation, he took a more formidable step and assumed that of Malietoa. This name, as I have said, is of peculiar honour; it had been given to, it had never been taken from, the exiled Laupepa; those in whose grant it lay, stood punctilious upon their rights; and Tamasese, as the representative of their natural opponents, the Tupua line, was the last who should have had it. And there was yet more, though I almost despair to make it thinkable by Europeans. Certain old mats are handed down, and set huge store by; they may be compared to coats of arms or heirlooms among ourselves; and to the horror of more than one-half of Samoa, Tamasese, the head of the Tupua, began collecting Malietoa mats. It was felt that the cup was full, and men began to prepare secretly for rebellion. The history of the month of August is unknown to whites; it passed altogether in the covert of the woods or in the stealthy councils of Samoans. One ominous sign

Digitized by Google

was to be noted: arms and ammunition began to be purchased or inquired about; and the more wary traders ordered fresh consignments of material of war. But the rest was silence; the government slept in security; and Brandeis was summoned at last from a public dinner, to find rebellion organised, the woods behind Apia full of insurgents, and a plan prepared, and in the very article of execution, to surprise and seize Mulinuu. The timely discovery averted all; and the leaders hastily withdrew towards the south side of the island, leaving in the bush a rear-guard under a young man of the name of Saifaleupolu. According to some accounts, it scarce numbered forty; the leader was no great chief, but a handsome, industrious lad who seems to have been much beloved. And upon this obstacle Brandeis fell. It is the man's fault to be too impatient of results; his public intention to free Samoa of all debt within the year, depicts him; and instead of continuing to temporise and let his enemies weary and disperse, he judged it politic to strike a blow. He struck it, with what seemed to be success, and the sound of it roused Samoa to rebellion.

About two in the morning of August 31st, Apia was wakened by men marching. Day came, and Brandeis and his war-party were already long disappeared in the woods. All morning belated Tamaseseites were still to be seen running with their guns. All morning shots were

listened for in vain; but over the top of the forest, far up the mountain, smoke was for some time observed to hang. About ten a dead man was carried in, lashed under a pole like a dead pig, his rosary (for he was a Catholic) hanging nearly to the ground. Next came a young fellow wounded, sitting in a rope swung from a pole; two fellows bearing him, two running behind for a relief. At last about eleven, three or four heavy volleys and a great shouting were heard from the bush town Tanungamanono; the affair was over, the victorious force, on the march back, was there celebrating its victory by the way. Presently after it marched through Apia, five or six hundred strong, in tolerable order and strutting with the ludicrous assumption of the triumphant islander. Women who had been buying bread ran and gave them loaves. At the tail end came Brandeis himself, smoking a cigar, deadly pale, and with perhaps an increase of his usual nervous manner. One spoke to him by the way. He expressed his sorrow the action had been forced on him. "Poor people, it's all the worse for them!" he said. "It'll have to be done another way now." And it was supposed by his hearer that he referred to intervention from the German war-ships. He meant, he said, to put a stop to head-hunting; his men had taken two that day, he added, but he had not suffered them to bring them in, and they had been left in Tanungamanono. Thither my informant rode, was

Digitized by Google

attracted by the sound of wailing, and saw in a house the two heads washed and combed, and the sister of one of the dead lamenting in the island fashion and kissing the cold face. Soon after, a small grave was dug, the heads were buried in a beef box, and the pastor read the service. The body of Saifaleupolo himself was recovered unmutilated, brought down from the forest, and buried behind Apia.

The same afternoon, the men of Vaimaunga were ordered to report in Mulinuu, where Tamasese's flag was half-masted for the death of a chief in the skirmish. Vaimaunga is that district of Tuamasanga which includes the bay and the foothills behind Apia; and both province and district are strong Malietoa. Not one man, it is said, obeyed the summons. Night came, and the town lay in unusual silence; no one abroad; the blinds down around the native houses, the men within sleeping on their arms; the old women keeping watch in pairs. And in the course of the two following days all Vaimaunga was gone into the bush, the very jailer setting free his prisoners and joining them in their escape. Hear the words of the chiefs in the 23d article of their complaint: "Some of the chiefs fled to the bush from fear of being reported, fear of German men-of-war, constantly being accused, etc., and Brandeis commanded that they were to be shot on sight. This act was carried out by Brandeis on the 31st day of August, 1888. After this we evaded these

Digitized by Google

laws; we could not stand them; our patience was worn out with the constant wickedness of Tamasese and Brandeis. We were tired out and could stand no longer the acts of these two men."

So through an ill-timed skirmish, two severed heads, and a dead body, the rule of Brandeis came to a sudden end. We shall see him a while longer fighting for existence in a losing battle; but his government, take it for all in all, the most promising that has ever been in these unlucky islands, was from that hour a piece of history.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE OF MATAUTU

September, 1888

THE revolution had all the character of a popular movement. Many of the high chiefs were detained in Mulinuu; the commons trooped to the bush under inferior leaders. A camp was chosen near Faleula, threatening Mulinuu, well placed for the arrival of recruits and close to a German plantation from which the force could be subsisted. Manono came, all Tuamasanga, much of Savaii, and part of Aana, Tamasese's own government and titular seat. Both sides were arming. It was a brave day for the trader, though not so brave as some that followed, when a single cartridge is said to have been sold for twelve cents currency—between nine and ten cents gold. Yet even among the traders a strong party feeling reigned, and it was the common practice to ask a purchaser upon which side he meant to fight.

On September 5th, Brandeis published a letter: "To the chiefs of Tuamasanga, Manono, and Faasaleleanga in the Bush: Chiefs, by authority

Digitized by Google

of his majesty Tamasese, the king of Samoa, I make known to you all that the German man-of-war is about to go together with a Samoan fleet for the purpose of burning Manano. After this island is all burnt, 'tis good if the people return to Manono and live quiet. To the people of Faasaleleanga I say, return to your houses and stop there. The same to those belonging to Tuamasanga. If you obey this instruction, then you will all be forgiven; if you do not obey, then all your villages will be burnt like Manono. These instructions are made in truth in the sight of God in the Heaven." The same morning, accordingly, the *Adler* steamed out of the bay with a force of Tamasese warriors and some native boats in tow, the Samoan fleet in question. Manono was shelled; the Tamasese warriors, under the conduct of a Manono traitor, who paid before many days the forfeit of his blood, landed and did some damage, but were driven away by the sight of a force returning from the mainland; no one was hurt, for the women and children, who alone remained on the island, found a refuge in the bush; and the *Adler* and her acolytes returned the same evening. The letter had been energetic; the performance fell below the programme. The demonstration annoyed and yet re-assured the insurgents, and it fully disclosed to the Germans a new enemy.

Captain Von Widersheim had been relieved. His successor, Captain Fritze, was an officer of

Digitized by Google

a different stamp. I have nothing to say of him but good; he seems to have obeyed the consul's requisitions with secret distaste; his despatches were of admirable candour; but his habits were retired, he spoke little English, and was far indeed from inheriting Von Widersheim's close relations with Commander Leary. It is believed by Germans that the American officer resented what he took to be neglect. I mention this, not because I believe it to depict Commander Leary, but because it is typical of a prevailing infirmity among Germans in Samoa. Touchy themselves, they read all history in the light of personal affronts and tiffs; and I find this weakness indicated by the big thumb of Bismarck, when he places "sensitiveness to small disrespects—*empfindlichkeit ueber mangel an respect*," among the causes of the wild career of Knappe. Whatever the cause, at least, the natives had no sooner taken arms than Leary appeared with violence upon that side. As early as the 3d, he had sent an obscure but menacing despatch to Brandeis. On the 6th, he fell on Fritze in the matter of the Manono bombardment. "The revolutionists," he wrote, "had an armed force in the field within a few miles of this harbour, when the vessels under your command transported the Tamasese troops to a neighbouring island with the avowed intention of making war on the isolated homes of the women and children of the enemy. Being the only other representative of a naval power

Digitized by Google

now present in this harbour, for the sake of humanity I hereby respectfully and solemnly protest in the name of the United States of America and of the civilised world in general against the use of a national war-vessel for such services as were yesterday rendered by the German corvette *Adler*." Fritze's reply, to the effect that he is under the orders of the consul and has no right of choice, reads even humble; perhaps he was not himself vain of the exploit, perhaps not prepared to see it thus described in words. From that moment Leary was in the front of the row. His name is diagnostic, but it was not required; on every step of his subsequent action in Samoa, Irishman is writ large; over all his doings a malign spirit of humour presided. No malice was too small for him, if it were only funny. When night signals were made from Mulinuu, he would sit on his own poop and confound them with gratuitous rockets. He was at the pains to write a letter and address it to "the High Chief Tamasese"—a device as old at least as the wars of Robert Bruce—in order to bother the officials of the German post-office, in whose hands he persisted in leaving it, although the address was death to them and the distribution of letters in Samoa formed no part of their profession. His great masterwork of pleasantry, the Scanlon affair, must be narrated in its place. And he was no less bold than comical. The *Adams* was not supposed to be a match for the *Adler;* there

Digitized by Google

was no glory to be gained in beating her; and yet I have heard naval officers maintain she might have proved a dangerous antagonist in narrow waters and at short range. Doubtless Leary thought so. He was continually daring Fritze to come on; and already, in a despatch of the 9th, I find Becker complaining of his language in the hearing of German officials, and how he had declared that, on the *Adler* again interfering, he would interfere himself, "if he went to the bottom for it—*und wenn sein Schiff dabei zu Grunde ginge.*" Here is a style of opposition which has the merit of being frank, not that of being agreeable. Becker was annoying, Leary infuriating; there is no doubt that the tempers in the German consulate were highly ulcerated; and if war between the two countries did not follow, we must set down the praise to the forbearance of the German navy. This is not the last time that I shall have to salute the merits of that service.

The defeat and death of Saifaleupolu and the burning of Manono had thus passed off without the least advantage to Tamasese. But he still held the significant position of Mulinuu, and Brandeis was strenuous to make it good. The whole peninsula was surrounded with a breastwork; across the isthmus it was six feet high and strengthened with a ditch; and the beach was staked against landing. Weber's land claim—the same that now broods over the village in the form of a signboard—then appeared in a more

Digitized by Google

military guise; the German flag was hoisted, and German sailors manned the breastwork at the isthmus—"to protect German property" and its trifling parenthesis, the king of Samoa. Much vigilance reigned and, in the island fashion, much wild firing. And in spite of all, desertion was for a long time daily. The detained high chiefs would go to the beach on the pretext of a natural occasion, plunge in the sea, and swimming across a broad, shallow bay of the lagoon, join the rebels on the Faleula side. Whole bodies of warriors, sometimes hundreds strong, departed with their arms and ammunition. On the 7th of September, for instance, the day after Leary's letter, Too and Mataia left with their contingents, and the whole Aana people returned home in a body to hold a parliament. Ten days later, it is true, a part of them returned to their duty; but another part branched off by the way and carried their services, and Tamasese's dear-bought guns, to Faleula. On the 8th, there was a defection of a different kind, but yet sensible. The High Chief Seumanu had been still detained in Mulinuu under anxious observation. His people murmured at his absence, threatened to "take away his name," and had already attempted a rescue. The adventure was now taken in hand by his wife Faatulia, a woman of much sense and spirit and a strong partisan; and by her contrivance, Seumanu gave his guardians the slip and rejoined his clan at Faleula. This process of

Digitized by Google

winnowing was of course counterbalanced by another of recruitment. But the harshness of European and military rule had made Brandeis detested and Tamasese unpopular with many; and the force on Mulinuu is thought to have done little more than hold its own. Mataafa sympathisers set it down at about two or three thousand. I have no estimate from the other side; but Becker admits they were not strong enough to keep the field in the open.

The political significance of Mulinuu was great, but in a military sense the position had defects. If it was difficult to carry, it was easy to blockade: and to be hemmed in on that narrow finger of land were an inglorious posture for the monarch of Samoa. The peninsula, besides, was scant of food and destitute of water. Pressed by these considerations, Brandeis extended his lines till he had occupied the whole foreshore of Apia bay and the opposite point, Matautu. His men were thus drawn out along some three nautical miles of irregular beach, everywhere with their backs to the sea, and without means of communication or mutual support except by water. The extension led to fresh sorrows. The Tamasese men quartered themselves in the houses of the absent men of the Vaimaunga. Disputes arose with English and Americans. Leary interposed in a loud voice of menace. It was said the firm profited by the confusion to buttress up imperfect land claims; I am sure the other whites

Digitized by Google

would not be far behind the firm. Properties were fenced in, fences and houses were torn down, scuffles ensued. The German example at Mulinuu was followed with laughable unanimity; wherever an Englishman or an American conceived himself to have a claim, he set up the emblem of his country; and the beach twinkled with the flags of nations.

All this, it will be observed, was going forward in that neutral territory sanctified by treaty against the presence of armed Samoans. The insurgents themselves looked on in wonder: on the 4th, trembling to transgress against the great powers, they had written for a delimitation of the *Eleele Sa;* and Becker, in conversation with the British consul, replied that he recognised none. So long as Tamasese held the ground, this was expedient. But suppose Tamasese worsted, it might prove awkward for the stores, mills, and offices of a great German firm, thus bared of shelter by the act of their own consul.

On the morning of the 9th September, just ten days after the death of Saifaleupolu, Mataafa, under the name of Malietoa To'oa Mataafa, was crowned king of Faleula. On the 11th he wrote to the British and American consuls: "Gentlemen, I write this letter to you two very humbly and entreatingly, on account of this difficulty that has come before me. I desire to know from you two gentlemen the truth where the boundaries of the neutral territory are. You will ob-

Digitized by Google

serve that I am now at Vaimoso [a step nearer the enemy], and I have stopped here until I knew what you say regarding the neutral territory. I wish to know where I can go and where the forbidden ground is, for I do not wish to go on any neutral territory, or on any foreigner's property. I do not want to offend any of the great powers. Another thing I would like. Would it be possible for you three consuls to make Tamasese remove from German property? for I am in awe of going on German land." He must have received a reply embodying Becker's renunciation of the principle at once; for he broke camp the same day and marched eastward through the bush behind Apia.

Brandeis, expecting attack, sought to improve his indefensible position. He reformed his centre by the simple expedient of suppressing it. Apia was evacuated. The two flanks, Mulinuu and Matautu, were still held and fortified, Mulinuu (as I have said) to the isthmus, Matautu on a line from the bayside to the little river Fuisá. The centre was represented by the trajectory of a boat across the bay from one flank to another, and was held (we may say) by the German warship. Mataafa decided (I am assured) to make a feint on Matautu, induce Brandeis to deplete Mulinuu in support, and then fall upon and carry that. And there is no doubt in my mind that such a plan was bruited abroad, for nothing but a belief in it could explain the behaviour of Bran-

Digitized by Google

deis on the 12th. That it was seriously entertained by Mataafa I stoutly disbelieve; the German flag and sailors forbidding the enterprise in Mulinuu. So that we may call this false intelligence the beginning and the end of Mataafa's strategy.

The whites who sympathised with the revolt were uneasy and impatient. They will still tell you, though the dates are there to show them wrong, that Mataafa, even after his coronation, delayed extremely: a proof of how long two days may seem to last when men anticipate events. On the evening of the 11th, while the new king was already on the march, one of these walked into Matautu. The moon was bright. By the way he observed the native houses dark and silent; the men had been about a fortnight in the bush, but now the women and children were gone also; at which he wondered. On the sea-beach, in the camp of the Tamaseses, the solitude was near as great; he saw three or four men smoking before the British consulate, perhaps a dozen in all; the rest were behind in the bush upon their line of forts. About the midst he sat down, and here a woman drew near to him. The moon shone in her face, and he knew her for a householder near by and a partisan of Mataafa's. She looked about her as she came, and asked him, trembling, what he did in the camp of Tamasese. He was there after news, he told her. She took him by the hand. "You must not stay

Digitized by Google

here, you will get killed," she said. "The bush is full of our people, the others are watching them, fighting may begin at any moment, and we are both here too long." So they set off together; and she told him by the way that she had come to the hostile camp with a present of bananas, so that the Tamasese men might spare her house. By the Vaisingano they met an old man, a woman, and a child; and these also she warned and turned back. Such is the strange part played by women among the scenes of Samoan warfare, such were the liberties then permitted to the whites, that these two could pass the lines, talk together in Tamasese's camp on the eve of an engagement, and pass forth again bearing intelligence, like privileged spies. And before a few hours the white man was in direct communication with the opposing general. The next morning he was accosted "about breakfast time" by two natives who stood leaning against the pickets of a public house, where the Siumu road strikes in at right angles to the main street of Apia. They told him battle was imminent, and begged him to pass a little way inland and speak with Mataafa. The road is at this point broad and fairly good, running between thick groves of coco-palm and breadfruit. A few hundred yards along this, the white man passed a picket of four armed warriors, with red handkerchiefs and their faces blacked in the form of a full beard, the Mataafa rallying signs for the

Digitized by Google

day; a little farther on, some fifty; farther still, a hundred; and at last a quarter of a mile of them sitting by the wayside armed and blacked. Near by, in the verandah of a house on a knoll, he found Mataafa seated in white clothes, a Winchester across his knees. His men, he said, were still arriving from behind, and there was a turning movement in operation beyond the Fuisá, so that the Tamaseses should be assailed at the same moment from the south and east. And this is another indication that the attack on Matauta was the true attack; had any design on Mulinuu been in the wind, not even a Samoan general would have detached these troops upon the other side. While they still spoke, five Tamasese women were brought in with their hands bound; they had been stealing "our" bananas.

All morning the town was strangely deserted, the very children gone. A sense of expectation reigned, and sympathy for the attack was expressed publicly. Some men with unblacked faces came to Moors's store for biscuit. A native woman, who was there marketing, inquired after the news, and, hearing that the battle was now near at hand, "Give them two more tins," said she; "and don't put them down to my husband—he would growl; put them down to me." Between twelve and one, two white men walked toward Matautu, finding as they went no sign of war until they had passed the Vaisingano and

Digitized by Google

come to the corner of a by-path leading to the bush. Here were four blackened warriors on guard—the extreme left wing of the Mataafa force, where it touched the waters of the bay. Thence the line (which the white men followed) stretched inland among bush and marsh, facing the forts of the Tamaseses. The warriors lay as yet inactive behind trees; but all the young boys and harlots of Apia toiled in the front upon a trench, digging with knives and coco-shells; and a continuous stream of children brought them water. The young sappers worked crouching; from the outside only an occasional head or a hand emptying a shell of earth was visible; and their enemies looked on inert from the line of the opposing forts. The lists were not yet prepared, the tournament not yet open; and the attacking force was suffered to throw up works under the silent guns of the defence. But there is an end even to the delay of islanders. As the white men stood and looked, the Tamasese line thundered into a volley; it was answered; the crowd of silent workers broke forth in laughter and cheers; and the battle had begun.

Thenceforward, all day and most of the next night, volley followed volley; and pounds of lead and pounds sterling of money continued to be blown into the air without cessation and almost without result. Colonel de Coetlogon, an old soldier, described the noise as deafening. The harbour was all struck with shots; a man was

Digitized by Google

knocked over on the German war-ship; half Apia was under fire; and a house was pierced beyond the Mulivai. All along the two lines of breastwork, the entrenched enemies exchanged this hail of balls; and away on the east of the battle the fusillade was maintained, with equal spirit, across the narrow barrier of the Fuisá. The whole rear of the Tamaseses was enfiladed by this flank fire; and I have seen a house there by the river brink, that was riddled with bullets like a piece of worm-eaten wreckwood. At this point of the field befell a trait of Samoan warfare worth recording. Taiese (brother to Sitione already mentioned) shot a Tamasese man. He saw him fall, and, inflamed with the lust of glory, passed the river single-handed in that storm of missiles to secure the head. On the farther bank, as was but natural, he fell himself, he who had gone to take a trophy remained to afford one; and the Mataafas, who had looked on exulting in the prospect of a triumph, saw themselves exposed instead to a disgrace. Then rose one Vingi, passed the deadly water, swung the body of Taiese on his back, and returned unscathed to his own side, the head saved, the corpse filled with useless bullets.

At this rate of practice, the ammunition soon began to run low, and from an early hour of the afternoon, the Malietoa stores were visited by customers in search of more. An elderly man came leaping and cheering, his gun in one hand,

Digitized by Google

a basket of three heads in the other. A fellow came shot through the forearm. "It doesn't hurt now," he said, as he bought his cartridges; "but it will hurt to-morrow, and I want to fight while I can." A third followed, a mere boy, with the end of his nose shot off: "Have you any pain-killer? give it me quick, so that I can get back to fight." On either side, there was the same delight in sound and smoke and schoolboy cheering, the same unsophisticated ardour of battle; and the misdirected skirmish proceeded with a din, and was illustrated with traits of bravery that would have fitted a Waterloo or a Sedan.

I have said how little I regard the alleged plan of battle. At least it was now all gone to water. The whole forces of Mataafa had leaked out, man by man, village by village, on the so-called false attack. They were all pounding for their lives on the front and the left flank of Matautu. About half-past three they enveloped the right flank also. The defenders were driven back along the beach road as far as the pilot station at the turn of the land. From this also they were dislodged, stubbornly fighting. One, it is told, retreated to his middle in the lagoon; stood there, loading and firing, till he fell; and his body was found on the morrow pierced with four mortal wounds. The Tamasese force was now enveloped on three sides; it was besides almost cut off from the sea; and across its whole rear and only way of retreat, a fire of hostile bullets

Digitized by Google

crossed from east and west, in the midst of which men were surprised to observe the birds continuing to sing, and a cow grazed all afternoon unhurt. Doubtless here was the defence in a poor way; but then the attack was in irons. For the Mataafas about the pilot house could scarcely advance beyond without coming under the fire of their own men from the other side of the Fuisá; and there was not enough organisation, perhaps not enough authority, to divert or to arrest that fire.

The progress of the fight along the beach road was visible from Mulinuu, and Brandeis despatched ten boats of reinforcements. They crossed the harbour, paused for a while beside the *Adler*—it was supposed for ammunition—and drew near the Matautu shore. The Mataafa men lay close among the shoreside bushes, expecting their arrival; when a silly lad, in mere lightness of heart, fired a shot in the air. My native friend, Mrs. Mary Hamilton, ran out of her house and gave the culprit a good shaking: an episode in the midst of battle as incongruous as the grazing cow. But his sillier comrades followed his example; a harmless volley warned the boats what they might expect; and they drew back and passed outside the reef for the passage of the Fuisá. Here they came under the fire of the right wing of the Mataafas on the river bank. The beach, raked east and west, appeared to them no place to land on. And they hung

Digitized by Google

off in the deep water of the lagoon inside the barrier reef, feebly fusillading the pilot house.

Between four and five, the Fabeata regiment (or folk of that village) on the Mataafa left, which had been under arms all day, fell to be withdrawn for rest and food; the Siumu regiment, which should have relieved it, was not ready or not notified in time; and the Tamaseses, gallantly profiting by the mismanagement, recovered the most of the ground in their proper right. It was not for long. They lost it again, yard by yard and from house to house, till the pilot station was once more in the hands of the Mataafas. This is the last definite incident in the battle. The vicissitudes along the line of the entrenchments remain concealed from us under the cover of the forest. Some part of the Tamasese position there appears to have been carried, but what part, or at what hour, or whether the advantage was maintained, I have never learned. Night and rain, but not silence, closed upon the field. The trenches were deep in mud; but the younger folk wrecked the houses in the neighbourhood, carried the roofs to the front, and lay under them, men and women together, through a long night of furious squalls and furious and useless volleys. Meanwhile the older folk trailed back into Apia in the rain; they talked as they went of who had fallen and what heads had been taken up on either side—they seemed to know by name the losses upon both; and drenched with

Digitized by Google

wet and broken with excitement and fatigue, they crawled into the verandahs of the town to eat and sleep. The morrow broke grey and drizzly, but as so often happens in the islands, cleared up into a glorious day. During the night, the majority of the defenders had taken advantage of the rain and darkness and stolen from their forts unobserved. The rallying sign of the Tamaseses had been a white handkerchief. With the dawn, the de Coetlogons from the English consulate beheld the ground strewn with these badges discarded; and close by the house, a belated turncoat was still changing white for red. Matautu was lost; Tamasese was confined to Mulinuu; and by nine o'clock two Mataafa villages paraded the streets of Apia, taking possession. The cost of this respectable success in ammunition must have been enormous; in life it was but small. Some compute forty killed on either side, others forty on both, three or four being women and one a white man, master of a schooner from Fiji. Nor was the number even of the wounded at all proportionate to the surprising din and fury of the affair while it lasted.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

LAST EXPLOITS OF BECKER

September to November, 1888

BRANDEIS had held all day by Mulinuu, expecting the reported real attack. He woke on the 13th to find himself cut off on that unwatered promontory, and the Mataafa villagers parading Apia. The same day Fritze received a letter from Mataafa summoning him to withdraw his party from the isthmus; and Fritze, as if in answer, drew in his ship into the small harbour close to Mulinuu, and trained his port battery to assist in the defence. From a step so decisive, it might be thought the German plans were unaffected by the disastrous issue of the battle. I conceive nothing would be further from the truth. Here was Tamasese penned on Mulinuu with his troops; Apia, from which alone these could be subsisted, in the hands of the enemy; a battle imminent, in which the German vessel must apparently take part with men and battery, and the buildings of the German firm were apparently destined to be the first target of fire. Unless Becker re-established that which

Digitized by Google

he had so lately and so artfully thrown down—the neutral territory—the firm would have to suffer. If he re-established it, Tamasese must retire from Mulinuu. If Becker saved his goose, he lost his cabbage. Nothing so well depicts the man's effrontery as that he should have conceived the design of saving both,—of re-establishing only so much of the neutral territory as should hamper Mataafa, and leaving in abeyance all that could incommode Tamasese. By drawing the boundary where he now proposed, across the isthmus, he protected the firm, drove back the Mataafas out of almost all that they had conquered, and, so far from disturbing Tamasese, actually fortified him in his old position.

The real story of the negotiations that followed we shall perhaps never learn. But so much is plain: that while Becker was thus outwardly straining decency in the interest of Tamasese, he was privately intriguing or pretending to intrigue with Mataafa. In his despatch of the 11th, he had given an extended criticism of that chieftain, whom he depicts as very dark and artful; and while admitting that his assumption of the name of Malietoa might raise him up followers, predicted that he could not make an orderly government or support himself long in the sole power "without very energetic foreign help." Of what help was the consul thinking? There was no helper in the field but Germany. On the 15th he had an interview with the victor; told

Digitized by Google

him that Tamasese's was the only government recognised by Germany, and that he must continue to recognise it till he received "other instructions from his government, whom he was now advising of the late events"; refused, accordingly, to withdraw the guard from the isthmus; and desired Mataafa, "until the arrival of these fresh instructions," to refrain from an attack on Mulinuu. One thing of two: either this language is extremely perfidious, or Becker was preparing to change sides. The same detachment appears in his despatch of October 7th. He computes the losses of the German firm with an easy cheerfulness. If Tamasese get up again (*gelingt die Wiederherstellung der Regierung Tamasese's*), Tamasese will have to pay. If not, then Mataafa. This is not the language of a partisan. The tone of indifference, the easy implication that the case of Tamasese was already desperate, the hopes held secretly forth to Mataafa and secretly reported to his government at home, trenchantly contrast with his external conduct. At this very time he was feeding Tamasese; he had German sailors mounting guard on Tamasese's battlements; the German war-ship lay close in, whether to help or to destroy. If he meant to drop the cause of Tamasese, he had him in a corner, helpless, and could stifle him without a sob. If he meant to rat, it was to be with every condition of safety and every circumstance of infamy.

Was it conceivable, then, that he meant it?

Digitized by Google

Speaking with a gentleman who was in the confidence of Dr. Knappe: "Was it not a pity," I asked, "that Knappe did not stick to Becker's policy of supporting Mataafa?"—"You are quite wrong there; that was not Knappe's doing," was the reply. "Becker had changed his mind before Knappe came." Why, then, had he changed it? This excellent, if ignominious, idea once entertained, why was it let drop? It is to be remembered there was another German in the field, Brandeis, who had a respect, or rather perhaps, an affection, for Tamasese, and who thought his own honour and that of his country engaged in the support of that government which they had provoked and founded. Becker described the captain to Laupepa as "a quiet, sensible gentleman." If any word came to his ears of the intended manœuvre, Brandeis would certainly show himself very sensible of the affront; but Becker might have been tempted to withdraw his former epithet of quiet. Some such passage, some such threatened change of front at the consulate, opposed with outcry, would explain what seems otherwise inexplicable, the bitter, indignant, almost hostile tone of a subsequent letter from Brandeis to Knappe—"Brandeis's inflammatory letter," Bismarck calls it—the proximate cause of the German landing and reverse at Fangalii.

But whether the advances of Becker were sincere or not—whether he meditated treachery

Digitized by Google

against the old king or was practising treachery upon the new, and the choice is between one or other—no doubt but he contrived to gain his points with Mataafa, prevailing on him to change his camp for the better protection of the German plantations, and persuading him (long before he could persuade his brother consuls) to accept that miraculous new neutral territory of his, with a piece cut out for the immediate needs of Tamasese.

During the rest of September, Tamasese continued to decline. On the 19th one village and half of another deserted him; on the 22d two more. On the 21st the Mataafas burned his town of Leulumoenga, his own splendid house flaming with the rest; and there are few things of which a native thinks more, or has more reason to think well, than of a fine Samoan house. Tamasese women and children were marched up the same day from Atua, and handed over with their sleeping mats to Mulinuu: a most unwelcome addition to a party already suffering from want. By the 20th, they were being watered from the *Adler*. On the 24th, the Manono fleet of sixteen large boats, fortified and rendered unmanageable with tons of firewood, passed to windward to intercept supplies from Atua. By the 27th, the hungry garrison flocked in great numbers to draw rations at the German firm. On the 28th, the same business was repeated with a different issue. Mataafas crowded to

Digitized by Google

look on; words were exchanged, blows followed; sticks, stones, and bottles were caught up; the detested Brandeis, at great risk, threw himself between the lines and expostulated with the Mataafas—his only personal appearance in the wars, if this could be called war. The same afternoon, the Tamasese boats got in with provisions, having passed to seaward of the lumbering Manono fleet; and from that day on, whether from a high degree of enterprise on the one side or a great lack of capacity on the other, supplies were maintained from the sea with regularity. Thus the spectacle of battle, or at least of riot, at the doors of the German firm was not repeated. But the memory must have hung heavy on the hearts, not of the Germans only, but of all Apia. The Samoans are a gentle race, gentler than any in Europe; we are often enough reminded of the circumstance, not always by their friends. But a mob is a mob, and a drunken mob is a drunken mob, and a drunken mob with weapons in its hands is a drunken mob with weapons in its hands, all the world over: elementary propositions, which some of us upon these islands might do worse than get by rote, but which must have been evident enough to Becker. And I am amazed by the man's constancy, that, even while blows were going at the door of that German firm which he was in Samoa to protect, he should have stuck to his demands. Ten days before Blacklock had offered to recognise the old terri-

Digitized by Google

tory including Mulinuu, and Becker had refused, and still in the midst of these "alarums and excursions," he continued to refuse it.

On October 2d, anchored in Apia bay, H. B. M. S. *Calliope*, Captain Kane, carrying the flag of Rear-Admiral Fairfax, and the gunboat *Lizard*, Lieutenant-Commander Pelly. It was rumoured the admiral had come to recognise the government of Tamasese, I believe in error. And at least the day for that was quite gone by; and he arrived not to salute the king's accession, but to arbitrate on his remains. A conference of the consuls and commanders met on board the *Calliope*, October 4th, Fritze alone being absent, although twice invited: the affair touched politics, his consul was to be there; and even if he came to the meeting (so he explained to Fairfax) he would have no voice in its deliberations. The parties were plainly marked out: Blacklock and Leary maintaining their offer of the old neutral territory, and probably willing to expand or to contract it to any conceivable extent, so long as Mulinuu was still included; Knappe offering (if the others liked) to include "the whole eastern end of the island," but quite fixed upon the one point that Mulinuu should be left out; the English willing to meet either view, and singly desirous that Apia should be neutralised. The conclusion was foregone. Becker held a trump card in the consent of Mataafa; Blacklock and Leary stood alone, spoke with an ill grace, and

Digitized by Google

could not long hold out. Becker had his way; and the neutral boundary was chosen just where he desired: across the isthmus, the firm within, Mulinuu without. He did not long enjoy the fruits of victory.

On the 7th, three days after the meeting, one of the Scanlons (well known and intelligent half-castes) came to Blacklock with a complaint. The Scanlon house stood on the hither side of the Tamasese breastwork, just inside the newly accepted territory, and within easy range of the firm. Armed men, to the number of a hundred, had issued from Mulinuu, had "taken charge" of the house, had pointed a gun at Scanlon's head, and had twice "threatened to kill" his pigs. I hear elsewhere of some effects (*Gegenstände*) removed. At the best a very pale atrocity, though we shall find the word employed. Germans declare besides that Scanlon was no American subject; they declare the point had been decided by court-martial in 1875; that Blacklock had the decision in the consular archives; and that this was his reason for handing the affair to Leary. It is not necessary to suppose so. It is plain he thought little of the business; thought indeed nothing of it; except in so far as armed men had entered the neutral territory from Mulinuu; and it was on this ground alone, and the implied breach of Becker's engagement at the conference, that he invited Leary's attention to the tale. The impish in-

Digitized by Google

genuity of the commander perceived in it huge possibilities of mischief. He took up the Scanlon outrage, the atrocity of the threatened pigs; and with that poor instrument—I am sure, to his own wonder—drove Tamasese out of Mulinuu. It was "an intrigue," Becker complains. To be sure it was; but who was Becker to be complaining of intrigue?

On the 7th Leary laid before Fritze the following conundrum: "As the natives at Mulinuu appear to be under the protection of the Imperial German naval guard belonging to the vessel under your command, I have the honour to request you to inform me whether or not they are under such protection? Amicable relations," pursued the humourist, "amicable relations exist between the government of the United States and His Imperial German Majesty's government, but we do not recognise Tamasese's government, and I am desirous of locating the responsibility for violations of American rights." Becker and Fritze lost no time in explanation or denial, but went straight to the root of the matter and sought to buy off Scanlon. Becker declares that every reparation was offered. Scanlon takes a pride to recapitulate the leases and the situations he refused, and the long interviews in which he was tempted and plied with drink by Becker or Beckmann of the firm. No doubt, in short, that he was offered reparation in reason and out of rea-

Digitized by Google

son, and being thoroughly primed, refused it all. Meantime some answer must be made to Leary; and Fritze repeated on the 8th his oft-repeated assurances that he was not authorised to deal with politics. The same day Leary retorted: "The question is not one of diplomacy nor of politics. It is strictly one of military jurisdiction and responsibility. Under the shadow of the German fort at Mulinuu," continued the hyperbolical commander, "atrocities have been committed. . . . And I again have the honour respectfully to request to be informed whether or not the armed natives at Mulinuu are under the protection of the Imperial German naval guard belonging to the vessel under your command." To this, no answer was vouchsafed till the 11th, and then in the old terms; and meanwhile, on the 10th, Leary got into his gaiters—the sure sign, as was both said and sung aboard his vessel, of some desperate or some amusing service—and was set ashore at the Scanlon's house. Of this he took possession at the head of an old woman and a mop, and was seen from the Tamasese breastwork directing operations and plainly preparing to install himself there in a military posture. So much he meant to be understood; so much he meant to carry out, and an armed party from the *Adams* was to have garrisoned on the morrow the scene of the atrocity. But there is no doubt he managed to convey more. No doubt he was a master in the art

Digitized by Google

of loose speaking, and could always manage to be overheard when he wanted; and by this, or some other equally unofficial means, he spread the rumour that on the morrow he was to bombard.

The proposed post, from its position, and from Leary's well-established character as an artist in mischief, must have been regarded by the Germans with uneasiness. In the bombardment, we can scarce suppose them to have believed. But Tamasese must have both believed and trembled. The prestige of the European powers was still unbroken. No native would then have dreamed of defying these colossal ships, worked by mysterious powers, and laden with outlandish instruments of death. None would have dreamed of resisting those strange but quite unrealised Great Powers understood (with difficulty) to be larger than Tonga and Samoa put together, and known to be prolific of prints, knives, hard biscuit, picture books, and other luxuries, as well as of overbearing men and inconsistent orders. Laupepa had fallen in ill-blood with one of them; his only idea of defence had been to throw himself in the arms of another; his name, his rank, and his great following had not been able to preserve him; and he had vanished from the eyes of men—as the Samoan thinks of it, beyond the sky. Asi, Maunga, Tuiletufunga, had followed him in that new path of doom. We have seen how carefully Mataafa

Digitized by Google

still walked, how he dared not set foot on the neutral territory till assured it was no longer sacred, how he withdrew from it again as soon as its sacredness had been restored and at the bare word of a consul (however gilded with ambiguous promises) paused in his course of victory and left his rival unassailed in Mulinuu. And now it was the rival's turn. Hitherto happy in the continued support of one of the white powers, he now found himself—or thought himself—threatened with war by no less than two others.

Tamasese boats as they passed Matautu were in the habit of firing on the shore, as like as not without particular aim and more in high spirits than hostility. One of these shots pierced the house of a British subject near the consulate; the consul reported to Admiral Fairfax; and, on the morning of the 10th, the admiral despatched Captain Kane of the *Calliope* to Mulinuu. Brandeis met the messenger with voluble excuses and engagements for the future. He was told his explanations were satisfactory so far as they went, but that the admiral's message was to Tamasese, the *de facto* king. Brandeis, not very well assured of his puppet's courage, attempted in vain to excuse him from appearing. No *de facto* king, no message, he was told: produce your *de facto* king. And Tamasese had at last to be produced. To him Kane delivered his errand: that the *Lizard* was to remain for the protection of British subjects; that a signalman was

Digitized by Google

to be stationed at the consulate; that, on any further firing from boats, the signalman was to notify the *Lizard* and she to fire one gun, on which all boats must lower sail and come alongside for examination and the detection of the guilty; and that, "in the event of the boats not obeying the gun, the admiral would not be responsible for the consequences." It was listened to by Brandeis and Tamasese "with the greatest attention." Brandeis, when it was done, desired his thanks to the admiral for the moderate terms of his message, and, as Kane went to his boat, repeated the expression of his gratitude as though he meant it, declaring his own hands would be thus strengthened for the maintenance of discipline. But I have yet to learn of any gratitude on the part of Tamasese. Consider the case of the poor owlish man hearing for the first time our diplomatic commonplaces. The admiral would not be answerable for the consequences. Think of it! A devil of a position for a *de facto* king. And here, the same afternoon, was Leary in the Scanlon house, mopping it out for unknown designs by the hands of an old woman, and proffering strange threats of bloodshed. Scanlon and his pigs, the admiral and his gun, Leary and his bombardment,—what a kettle of fish!

I dwell on the effect on Tamasese. Whatever the faults of Becker, he was not timid; he had already braved so much for Mulinuu that

Digitized by Google

I cannot but think he might have continued to hold up his head even after the outrage of the pigs, and that the weakness now shown originated with the king. Late in the night, Blacklock was wakened to receive a despatch addressed to Leary. "You have asked that I and my government go away from Mulinuu, because you pretend a man who lives near Mulinuu and who is under your protection has been threatened by my soldiers. As your excellency has forbidden the man to accept any satisfaction, and as I do not wish to make war against the United States, I shall remove my government from Mulinuu to another place." It was signed by Tamasese, but I think more heads than his had wagged over the direct and able letter. On the morning of the 11th, accordingly, Mulinuu the much defended lay desert. Tamasese and Brandeis had slipped to sea in a schooner; their troops had followed them in boats; the German sailors and their war-flag had returned on board the *Adler;* and only the German merchant flag blew there for Weber's land-claim. Mulinuu, for which Becker had intrigued so long and so often, for which he had overthrown the municipality, for which he had abrogated and refused and invented successive schemes of neutral territory, was now no more to the Germans than a very unattractive, barren peninsula and a very much disputed land-claim of Mr. Weber's. It will scarcely be believed that the tale of the Scanlon

Digitized by Google

outrages was not yet finished. Leary had gained his point, but Scanlon had lost his compensation. And it was months later, and this time in the shape of a threat of bombardment in black and white, that Tamasese heard the last of the absurd affair. Scanlon had both his fun and his money, and Leary's practical joke was brought to an artistic end.

Becker sought and missed an instant revenge. Mataafa, a devout Catholic, was in the habit of walking every morning to mass from his camp at Vaiala beyond Matautu to the mission at the Mulvaii. He was sometimes escorted by as many as six guards in uniform, who displayed their proficiency in drill by perpetually shifting arms as they marched. Himself, meanwhile, paced in front, bareheaded and barefoot, a staff in his hand, in the customary chief's dress of white kilt, shirt, and jacket, and with a conspicuous rosary about his neck. Tall but not heavy, with eager eyes and a marked appearance of courage and capacity, Mataafa makes an admirable figure in the eyes of Europeans; to those of his countrymen, he may seem not always to preserve that quiescence of manner which is thought becoming in the great. On the morning of October 16th, he reached the mission before day with two attendants, heard mass, had coffee with the fathers, and left again in safety. The smallness of his following we may suppose to have been reported. He was scarce gone, at least, before

Digitized by Google

Becker had armed men at the mission gate and came in person seeking him.

The failure of this attempt doubtless still further exasperated the consul, and he began to deal as in an enemy's country. He had marines from the *Adler* to stand sentry over the consulate and parade the streets by threes and fours. The bridge of the Vaisingano, which cuts in half the English and American quarters, he closed by proclamation and advertised for tenders to demolish it. On the 17th, Leary and Pelly landed carpenters and repaired it in his teeth. Leary, besides, had marines under arms, ready to land them if it should be necessary to protect the work. But Becker looked on without interference, perhaps glad enough to have the bridge repaired; for even Becker may not always have offended intentionally. Such was now the distracted posture of the little town: all government extinct, the German consul patrolling it with armed men and issuing proclamations like a ruler, the two other powers defying his commands, and at least one of them prepared to use force in the defiance. Close on its skirts sat the warriors of Mataafa, perhaps four thousand strong, highly incensed against the Germans, having all to gain in the seizure of the town and firm, and like an army in a fairy tale, restrained by the air-drawn boundary of the neutral ground.

I have had occasion to refer to the strange appearance in these islands of an American adven-

Digitized by Google

turer with a battery of cannon. The adventurer was long since gone, but his guns remained, and one of them was now to make fresh history. It had been cast overboard by Brandeis on the outer reef in the course of this retreat; and word of it coming to the ears of the Mataafas, they thought it natural that they should serve themselves the heirs of Tamasese. On the 23d, a Manono boat of the kind called *taumualua* dropped down the coast from Mataafa's camp, called in broad day at the German quarter of the town for guides, and proceeded to the reef. Here, diving with a rope, they got the gun aboard; and the night being then come, returned by the same route in the shallow water along shore, singing a boat song. It will be seen with what childlike reliance they had accepted the neutrality of Apia bay; they came for the gun without concealment, laboriously dived for it in broad day under the eyes of the town and shipping, and returned with it, singing as they went. On Gresvmühl's wharf, a light showed them a crowd of German bluejackets clustered, and a hail was heard. "Stop the singing so that we may hear what is said," said one of the chiefs in the *taumualua*. The song ceased; the hail was heard again, "*Au mai le fana*—bring the gun"; and the natives report themselves to have replied in the affirmative, and declare they had begun to back the boat. It is perhaps not needful to believe them. A volley at least was fired from the wharf, at about fifty

Digitized by Google

yards' range and with a very ill direction, one bullet whistling over Pelly's head on board the *Lizard*. The natives jumped overboard; and swimming under the lee of the *taumualua* (where they escaped a second volley) dragged her towards the east. As soon as they were out of range and past the Mulivai, the German border, they got on board and (again singing—though perhaps a different song) continued their return along the English and American shore. Off Matautu they were hailed from seaward by one of the *Adler's* boats, which had been suddenly despatched on the sound of the firing or had stood ready all evening to secure the gun. The hail was in German; the Samoans knew not what it meant, but took the precaution to jump overboard and swim for land. Two volleys and some dropping shot were poured upon them in the water; but they dived, scattered, and came to land unhurt in different quarters of Matautu. The volleys, fired inshore, raked the highway, a British house was again pierced by numerous bullets, and these sudden sounds of war scattered consternation through the town.

Two British subjects, Hetherington-Carruthers, a solicitor, and Maben, a land-surveyor—the first being in particular a man well versed in the native mind and language—hastened at once to their consul; assured him the Mataafas would be roused to fury by this onslaught in the neutral zone, that the German quarter would be cer-

Digitized by Google

tainly attacked, and the rest of the town and white inhabitants exposed to a peril very difficult of estimation; and prevailed upon him to intrust them with a mission to the king. By the time they reached headquarters, the warriors were already taking post round Matafele, and the agitation of Mataafa himself was betrayed in the fact that he spoke with the deputation standing and gun in hand: a breach of high-chief dignity perhaps unparalleled. The usual result, however, followed: the whites persuaded the Samoan; and the attack was countermanded, to the benefit of all concerned, and not least of Mataafa. To the benefit of all, I say; for I do not think the Germans were that evening in a posture to resist; the liquor cellars of the firm must thus have fallen into the power of the insurgents; and I will repeat my formula that a mob is a mob, a drunken mob is a drunken mob, and a drunken mob with weapons in its hands is a drunken mob with weapons in its hands, all the world over.

In the opinion of some, then, the town had narrowly escaped destruction or at least the miseries of a drunken sack. To the knowledge of all, the air of the neutral territory had once more whistled with bullets. And it was clear the incident must have diplomatic consequences. Leary and Pelly both protested to Fritze. Leary announced he should report the affair to his government "as a gross violation of the principles of

Digitized by Google

international law and as a breach of the neutrality." "I positively decline the protest," replied Fritze, "and cannot fail to express my astonishment at the tone of your last letter." This was trenchant. It may be said, however, that Leary was already out of court; that, after the night signals and the Scanlon incident, and so many other acts of practical if humorous hostility, his position as a neutral was no better than a doubtful jest. The case with Pelly was entirely different; and with Pelly, Fritze was less well inspired. In his first note, he was on the old guard; announced that he had acted on the requisition of his consul, who was alone responsible on "the legal side"; and declined accordingly to discuss "whether the lives of British subjects were in danger, and to what extent armed intervention was necessary." Pelly replied judiciously that he had nothing to do with political matters, being only responsible for the safety of Her Majesty's ship under his command and for the lives and property of British subjects; that he had considered his protest a purely naval one; and as the matter stood could only report the case to the admiral on the station. "I have the honour," replied Fritze, "to refuse to entertain the protest concerning the safety of Her Britannic Majesty's ship *Lizard* as being a naval matter. The safety of Her Majesty's ship *Lizard* was never in the least endangered. This was guaranteed by the disciplined fire of a few shots under the direc-

Digitized by Google

tion of two officers." This offensive note, in view of Fritze's careful and honest bearing among so many other complications, may be attributed to some misunderstanding. His small knowledge of English perhaps failed him. But I cannot pass it by without remarking how far too much it is the custom of German officials to fall into this style. It may be witty, I am sure it is not wise. It may be sometimes necessary to offend for a definite object, it can never be diplomatic to offend gratuitously.

Becker was more explicit, although scarce less curt. And his defence may be divided into two statements: first, that the *taumualua* was proceeding to land with a hostile purpose on Mulinuu; second, that the shots complained of were fired by the Samoans. The second may be dismissed with a laugh. Human nature has laws. And no men hitherto discovered, on being suddenly challenged from the sea, would have turned their backs upon the challenger and poured volleys on the friendly shore. The first is not extremely credible, but merits examination. The story of the recovered gun seems straightforward; it is supported by much testimony, the diving operations on the reef seem to have been watched from shore with curiosity; it is hard to suppose that it does not roughly represent the fact. And yet if any part of it be true, the whole of Becker's explanation falls to the ground. A boat which had skirted the whole eastern coast

Digitized by Google

of Mulinuu, and was already opposite a wharf in Matafele, and still going west, might have been guilty on a thousand points—there was one on which she was necessarily innocent; she was necessarily innocent of proceeding on Mulinuu. Or suppose the diving operations, and the native testimony, and Pelly's chart of the boat's course, and the boat itself, to be all stages of some epidemic hallucination or steps in a conspiracy—suppose even a second *taumualua* to have entered Apia bay after nightfall, and to have been fired upon from Grevsmühl's wharf in the full career of hostilities against Mulinuu—suppose all this, and Becker is not helped. At the time of the first fire, the boat was off Grevsmühl's wharf. At the time of the second (and that is the one complained of) she was off Carruthers's wharf in Matautu. Was she still proceeding on Mulinuu? I trow not. The danger to German property was no longer imminent, the shots had been fired upon a very trifling provocation, the spirit implied was that of designed disregard to the neutrality. Such was the impression here on the spot; such in plain terms the statement of Count Hatzfeldt to Lord Salisbury at home: that the neutrality of Apia was only "to prevent the natives from fighting," not the Germans; and that whatever Becker might have promised at the conference, he could not "restrict German war-vessels in their freedom of action."

Digitized by Google

There was nothing to surprise in this discovery; and had events been guided at the same time with a steady and discreet hand, it might have passed with less observation. But the policy of Becker was felt to be not only reckless, it was felt to be absurd also. Sudden nocturnal onfalls upon native boats could lead, it was felt, to no good end whether of peace or war; they could but exasperate; they might prove, in a moment and when least expected, ruinous. To those who knew how nearly it had come to fighting, and who considered the probable result, the future looked ominous. And fear was mingled with annoyance in the minds of the Anglo-Saxon colony. On the 24th, a public meeting appealed to the British and American consuls. At half-past seven in the evening guards were landed at the consulates. On the morrow they were each fortified with sand-bags; and the subjects informed by proclamation that these asylums stood open to them on any alarm, and at any hour of the day or night. The social bond in Apia was dissolved. The consuls, like barons of old, dwelt each in his armed citadel. The rank and file of the white nationalities dared each other, and sometimes fell to on the street like rival clansmen. And the little town, not by any fault of the inhabitants, rather by the act of Becker, had fallen back in civilisation about a thousand years.

There falls one more incident to be narrated,

Digitized by Google

and then I can close with this ungracious chapter. I have mentioned the name of the new English consul. It is already familiar to English readers; for the gentleman who was fated to undergo some strange experiences in Apia, was the same de Coetlogon who covered Hicks's flank at the time of the disaster in the desert, and bade farewell to Gordon in Khartoum before the investment. The colonel was abrupt and testy; Mrs. de Coetlogon was too exclusive for a society like that of Apia; but whatever their superficial disabilities, it is strange they should have left, in such an odour of unpopularity, a place where they set so shining an example of the sterling virtues. The colonel was perhaps no diplomatist; he was certainly no lawyer; but he discharged the duties of his office with the constancy and courage of an old soldier, and these were found sufficient. He and his wife had no ambition to be the leaders of society; the consulate was in their time no house of feasting; but they made of it that house of mourning to which the preacher tells us it is better we should go. At an early date after the battle of Matautu, it was opened as a hospital for the wounded. The English and Americans subscribed what was required for its support. Pelly of the *Lizard* strained every nerve to help, and set up tents on the lawn to be a shelter for the patients. The doctors of the English and American ships, and in particular Dr. Oakley of the *Lizard*, showed themselves

Digitized by Google

indefatigable. But it was on the de Coetlogons that the distress fell. For nearly half a year, their lawn, their verandah, sometimes their rooms, were cumbered with the sick and dying, their ears were filled with the complaints of suffering humanity, their time was too short for the multiplicity of pitiful duties. In Mrs. de Coetlogon, and her helper, Miss Taylor, the merit of this endurance was perhaps to be looked for; in a man of the colonel's temper, himself painfully suffering, it was viewed with more surprise if with no more admiration. Doubtless, all had their reward in a sense of duty done; doubtless, also, as the days passed, in the spectacle of many traits of gratitude and patience, and in the success that waited on their efforts. Out of a hundred cases treated, only five died. They were all well behaved, though full of childish wiles. One old gentleman, a high chief, was seized with alarming symptoms of bellyache whenever Mrs. de Coetlogon went her rounds at night: he was after brandy. Others were insatiable for morphine or opium. A chief woman had her foot amputated under chloroform. "Let me see my foot! Why does it not hurt?" she cried. "It hurt so badly before I went to sleep." Siteone, whose name has been already mentioned, had his shoulder-blade excised, lay the longest of any, perhaps behaved the worst, and was on all these grounds the favourite. At times he was furiously irritable, and would rail upon his

Digitized by Google

family and rise in bed until he swooned with pain. Once on the balcony he was thought to be dying, his family keening round his mat, his father exhorting him to be prepared, when Mrs. de Coetlogon brought him round again with brandy and smelling-salts. After discharge, he returned upon a visit of gratitude; and it was observed, that instead of coming straight to the door, he went and stood long under his umbrella on that spot of ground where his mat had been stretched and he had endured pain so many months. Similar visits were the rule, I believe without exception; and the grateful patients loaded Mrs. de Coetlogon with gifts which (had that been possible in Polynesia) she would willingly have declined, for they were often of value to the givers.

The tissue of my story is one of rapacity, intrigue, and the triumphs of temper; the hospital at the consulate stands out almost alone as an episode of human beauty, and I dwell on it with satisfaction. But it was not regarded at the time with universal favour; and even to-day its institution is thought by many to have been impolitic. It was opened, it stood open, for the wounded of either party. As a matter of fact it was never used but by the Mataafas, and the Tamaseses were cared for exclusively by German doctors. In the progressive decivilisation of the town, these duties of humanity became thus a ground of quarrel. When the Mataafa hurt were first brought together after the battle of

Digitized by Google

Matautu, and some more or less amateur surgeons were dressing wounds on a green by the wayside, one from the German consulate went by in the road. "Why don't you let the dogs die?" he asked.—"Go to Hell," was the rejoinder. Such were the amenities of Apia. But Becker reserved for himself the extreme expression of this spirit. On November 7th, hostilities began again between the Samoan armies, and an inconclusive skirmish sent a fresh crop of wounded to the de Coetlogons. Next door to the consulate, some native houses and a chapel (now ruinous) stood on a green. Chapel and houses were certainly Samoan, but the ground was under a land-claim of the German firm; and de Coetlogon wrote to Becker requesting permission (in case it should prove necessary) to use these structures for his wounded. Before an answer came, the hospital was startled by the appearance of a case of gangrene, and the patient was hastily removed into the chapel. A rebel laid on German ground—here was an atrocity! The day before his own relief, November 11th, Becker ordered the man's instant removal. By his aggressive carriage and singular mixture of violence and cunning, he had already largely brought about the fall of Brandeis, and forced into an attitude of hostility the whole non-German population of the islands. Now, in his last hour of office, by this wanton buffet to his English colleague, he prepared a continuance of evil days

Digitized by Google

for his successor. If the object of diplomacy be the organisation of failure in the midst of hate, he was a great diplomatist. And amongst a certain party on the beach he is still named as the ideal consul.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

THE SAMOAN CAMPS

November, 1888

WHEN Brandeis and Tamasese fled by night from Mulinuu, they carried their wandering government some six miles to windward, to a position above Lotoanuu. For some three miles to the eastward of Apia, the shores of Upolu are low and the ground rises with a gentle acclivity, much of which waves with German plantations. A barrier reef encloses a lagoon passable for boats: and the traveller skims there, on smooth, many-tinted shallows, between the wall of the breakers on the one hand, and on the other a succession of palm-tree capes and cheerful beach-side villages. Beyond the great plantation of Vailele, the character of the coast is changed. The barrier reef abruptly ceases, the surf beats direct upon the shore; and the mountains and untenanted forest of the interior descend sheer into the sea. The first mountain promontory is Letongo. The bay beyond is called Laulii, and became the headquarters of Mataafa. And on the next projection, on steep,

Digitized by Google

intricate ground, veiled in forest and cut up by gorges and defiles, Tamasese fortified his lines. This greenwood citadel, which proved impregnable by Samoan arms, may be regarded as his front; the sea covered his right; and his rear extended along the coast as far as Saluafata, and thus commanded and drew upon a rich country including the plain of Falefá.

He was left in peace from 11th October till November 6th. But his adversary is not wholly to be blamed for this delay, which depended upon island etiquette. His Savaii contingent had not yet come in, and to have moved again without waiting for them would have been surely to offend, perhaps to lose them. With the month of November they began to arrive; on the 2d twenty boats, on the 3d twenty-nine, on the 5th seventeen. On the 6th the position Mataafa had so long occupied on the skirts of Apia was deserted; all that day and night his force kept streaming eastward to Laulii; and on the 7th the siege of Lotoanuu was opened with a brisk skirmish.

Each side built forts, facing across the gorge of a brook. An endless fusillade and shouting maintained the spirit of the warriors; and at night, even if the firing slackened, the pickets continued to exchange from either side volleys of songs and pungent pleasantries. Nearer hostilities were rendered difficult by the nature of the ground, where men must thread dense bush

Digitized by Google

and clamber on the face of precipices. Apia was near enough; a man, if he had a dollar or two, could walk in before a battle and array himself in silk or velvet. Casualties were not common; there was nothing to cast gloom upon the camps, and no more danger than was required to give a spice to the perpetual firing. For the young warriors it was a period of admirable enjoyment. But the anxiety of Mataafa must have been great and growing. His force was now considerable. It was scarce likely he should ever have more. That he should be long able to supply them with ammunition seemed incredible: at the rates then or soon after current, hundreds of pounds sterling might be easily blown into the air by the skirmishers in the course of a few days. And in the meanwhile, on the mountain opposite, his outnumbered adversary held his ground unshaken.

By this time the partisanship of the whites was unconcealed. Americans supplied Mataafa with ammunition; English and Americans openly subscribed together and sent boat-loads of provisions to his camp. One such boat started from Apia on a day of rain; it was pulled by six oars, three being paid by Moors, three by the Macarthurs; Moors himself and a clerk of the Macarthurs' were in charge; and the load included not only beef and biscuit, but three or four thousand rounds of ammunition. They came ashore in Laulii, and carried the gift to Mataafa. While

Digitized by Google

they were yet in his house a bullet passed overhead; and out of his door they could see the Tamasese pickets on the opposite hill. Thence, they made their way to the left flank of the Mataafa position next the sea. A Tamasese barricade was visible across the stream. It rained, but the warriors crowded in their shanties, squatted in the mud, and maintained an excited conversation. Balls flew; either faction, both happy as lords, spotting for the other in chance shots, and missing. One point is characteristic of that war; experts in native feeling doubt if it will characterise the next. The two white visitors passed without and between the lines to a rocky point upon the beach. The person of Moors was well known; the purpose of their coming to Laulii must have been already bruited abroad; yet they were not fired upon. From the point they spied a crow's-nest, or hanging fortification, higher up; and, judging it was a good position for a general view, obtained a guide. He led them up a steep side of the mountain, where they must climb by roots and tufts of grass; and coming to an open hill-top with some scattered trees, bade them wait, let him draw the fire, and then be swift to follow. Perhaps a dozen balls whistled about him ere he had crossed the dangerous passage and dropped on the farther side into the crow's-nest; the white men, briskly following, escaped unhurt. The crow's-nest was built like a bartizan on the precipitous front

Digitized by Google

of the position. Across the ravine, perhaps at five hundred yards, heads were to be seen popping up and down in a fort of Tamasese's. On both sides the same enthusiasm without council, the same senseless vigilance, reigned. Some took aim; some blazed before them at a venture. Now—when a head showed on the other side—one would take a crack at it, remarking it would never do to "miss a chance." Now they would all fire a volley and bob down; a return volley rang across the ravine, and was punctually answered: harmless as lawn-tennis. The whites expostulated in vain. The warriors, drunken with noise, made answer by a fresh general discharge and bade their visitors run while it was time. Upon their return to headquarters, men were covering the front with sheets of coral limestone, two balls having passed through the house in the interval. Mataafa sat within, over his kava bowl, unmoved. The picture is of a piece throughout: excellent courage, super-excellent folly; a war of school-children; expensive guns and cartridges used like squibs or catherine-wheels on Guy Fawkes's day.

On the 20th, Mataafa changed his attack. Tamasese's front was seemingly impregnable. Something must be tried upon his rear. There was his bread-basket; a small success in that direction would immediately curtail his resources; and it might be possible with energy to roll up his line along the beach and take the citadel in

Digitized by Google

reverse. The scheme was carried out as might be expected from these childish soldiers. Mataafa, always uneasy about Apia, clung with a portion of his force to Laulii; and thus, had the foe been enterprising, exposed himself to disaster. The expedition fell successfully enough on Saluafata and drove out the Tamaseses with a loss of four heads; but so far from improving the advantage, yielded immediately to the weakness of the Samoan warrior, and ranged farther east through unarmed populations, bursting with shouts and blackened faces into villages terrified or admiring, making spoil of pigs, burning houses, and destroying gardens. The Tamaseses had at first evacuated several beach towns in succession, and were still in retreat on Lotuanuu; finding themselves unpursued, they reoccupied them one after another, and re-established their lines to the very borders of Saluafata. Night fell; Mataafa had taken Saluafata, Tamasese had lost it; and that was all. But the day came near to have a different and very singular issue. The village was not long in the hands of the Mataafas, when a schooner, flying German colours, put into the bay and was immediately surrounded by their boats. It chanced that Brandeis was on board. Word of it had gone abroad, and the boats as they approached demanded him with threats. The late premier, alone, entirely unarmed, and a prey to natural and painful feelings, concealed himself below. The captain of the

Digitized by Google

schooner remained on deck, pointed to the German colours, and defied approaching boats. Again the prestige of a great power triumphed; the Samoans fell back before the bunting; the schooner worked out of the bay; Brandeis escaped. He himself apprehended the worst if he fell into Samoan hands; it is my diffident impression that his life would have been safe.

On the 22d, a new German war-ship, the *Eber*, of tragic memory, came to Apia from the Gilberts, where she had been disarming turbulent islands. The rest of that day and all night she loaded stores from the firm, and on the morrow reached Saluafata bay. Thanks to the misconduct of the Mataafas, the most of the foreshore was still in the hands of the Tamaseses; and they were thus able to receive from the *Eber* both the stores and weapons. The weapons had been sold long since to Tarawa, Apaiang, and Pleasant Island; places unheard of by the general reader, where obscure inhabitants paid for these instruments of death in money or in labour, misused them as it was known they would be misused, and had been disarmed by force. The *Eber* had brought back the guns to a German counter, whence many must have been originally sold; and was here engaged, like a shopboy, in their distribution to fresh purchasers. Such is the vicious circle of the traffic in weapons of war. Another aid of a more metaphysical nature was ministered by the *Eber* to Tamasese, in the shape of

uncountable German flags. The full history of this epidemic of bunting falls to be told in the next chapter. But the fact has to be chronicled here, for I believe it was to these flags that we owe the visit of the *Adams*, and my next and best authentic glance into a native camp. The *Adams* arrived in Saluafata on the 26th. On the morrow Leary and Moors landed at the village. It was still occupied by Mataafas, mostly from Manono and Savaii, few in number, high in spirit. The Tamasese pickets were meanwhile within musket range; there was maintained a steady sputtering of shots; and yet a party of Tamasese women were here on a visit to the women of Manono, with whom they sat talking and smoking, under the fire of their own relatives. It was reported that Leary took part in a council of war, and promised to join with his broadside in the next attack. It is certain he did nothing of the sort: equally certain that, in Tamasese circles, he was firmly credited with having done so. And this heightens the extraordinary character of what I have now to tell. Prudence and delicacy alike ought to have forbid the camp of Tamasese to the feet of either Leary or Moors. Moors was the original—there was a time when he had been the only—opponent of the puppet king. Leary had driven him from the seat of government; it was but a week or two since he had threatened to bombard him in his present refuge. Both were in close and daily council

Digitized by Google

with his adversary, and it was no secret that Moors was supplying the latter with food. They were partisans; it lacked but a hair that they should be called belligerents; it were idle to try to deny they were the most dangerous of spies. And yet these two now sailed across the bay and landed inside the Tamasese lines at Salelesi. On the very beach they had another glimpse of the artlessness of Samoan war. Hitherto, the Tamasese fleet, being hardy and unencumbered, had made a fool of the huge floating forts upon the other side; and here they were toiling, not to produce another boat on their own pattern in which they had always enjoyed the advantage, but to make a new one the type of their enemies', of which they had now proved the uselessness for months. It came on to rain as the Americans landed; and though none offered to oppose their coming ashore, none invited them to take shelter. They were nowise abashed, entered a house unbidden, and were made welcome with obvious reserve. The rain clearing off, they set forth westward, deeper into the heart of the enemies' position. Three or four young men ran some way before them, doubtless to give warning; and Leary, with his indomitable taste for mischief, kept inquiring as he went after "the high chief" Tamasese. The line of the beach was one continuous breastwork; some thirty-odd iron cannon of all sizes and patterns stood mounted in embrazures; plenty of grape and canister lay ready;

Digitized by Google

and at every hundred yards or so, the German flag was flying. The numbers of the guns and flags I give as I received them, though they test my faith. At the house of Brandeis—a little, weatherboard house, crammed at the time with natives, men, women, and squalling children—Leary and Moors again asked for "the high chief," and were again assured that he was farther on. A little beyond, the road ran in one place somewhat inland, the two Americans had gone down to the line of the beach to continue their inspection of the breastwork, when Brandeis himself, in his shirt sleeves and accompanied by several German officers, passed them by the line of the road. The two parties saluted in silence. Beyond Eva point, there was an observable change for the worse in the reception of the Americans; some whom they met began to mutter at Moors; and the adventurers, with tardy but commendable prudence, desisted from their search after the high chief, and began to retrace their steps. On the return, Suatele and some chiefs were drinking kava in a "big house," and called them in to join—their only invitation. But the night was closing, the rain had begun again: they stayed but for civility, and returned on board the *Adams*, wet and hungry, and I believe delighted with their expedition. It was perhaps the last, as it was certainly one of the most extreme examples of that divinity which once hedged the white in Samoa. The feeling

Digitized by Google

was already different in the camp of Mataafa, where the safety of a German loiterer had been a matter of extreme concern. Ten days later, three commissioners, an Englishman, an American, and a German, approached a post of Mataafas, were challenged by an old man with a gun, and mentioned in answer what they were. "*Ifea Siamani?* Which is the German?" cried the old gentleman, dancing, and with his finger on the trigger; and the commissioners stood somewhile in a very anxious posture, till they were released by the opportune arrival of a chief. It was November the 27th when Leary and Moors completed their absurd excursion; in about three weeks an event was to befall which changed at once, and probably for ever, the relation of the natives and the whites.

By the 28th Tamasese had collected seventeen hundred men in the trenches before Saluafata, thinking to attack next day. But the Mataafas evacuated the place in the night. At half-past five on the morning of the 29th, a signal gun was fired in the trenches at Laulii, and the Tamasese citadel was assaulted and defended with a fury new among Samoans. When the battle ended on the following day, one or more outworks remained in the possession of Mataafa. Another had been taken and lost as many as four times. Carried originally by a mixed force from Savaii and Tuamasanga, the victors, instead of completing fresh defences or pursuing their ad-

Digitized by Google

vantage, fell to eat and smoke and celebrate their victory with impromptu songs. In this humour, a rally of the Tamaseses smote them, drove them out pell mell, and tumbled them into the ravine, where many broke their heads and legs. Again the work was taken, again lost. Ammunition failed the belligerents; and they fought hand to hand in the contested fort with axes, clubs, and clubbed rifles. The sustained ardour of the engagement surprised even those who were engaged; and the butcher's bill was counted extraordinary by Samoans. On December 1st, the women of either side collected the headless bodies of the dead, each easily identified by the name tattooed on his forearm. Mataafa is thought to have lost sixty killed; and the de Coetlogons' hospital received three women and forty men. The casualties on the Tamasese side cannot be accepted, but they were presumably much less.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

AFFAIRS OF LAULII AND FANGALII

November to December, 1888

FOR Becker I have not been able to conceal my distaste, for he seems to me both false and foolish. But of his successor, the unfortunately famous Dr. Knappe, we may think as of a good enough fellow driven distraught. Fond of Samoa and the Samoans, he thought to bring peace and enjoy popularity among the islanders; of a genial, amiable, and sanguine temper, he made no doubt but he could repair the breach with the English consul. Hope told a flattering tale. He awoke to find himself exchanging defiances with de Coetlogon, beaten in the field by Mataafa, surrounded on the spot by general exasperation, and disowned from home by his own government. The history of his administration leaves on the mind of the student a sentiment of pity scarcely mingled.

On Blacklock he did not call, and, in view of Leary's attitude, may be excused. But the English consul was in a different category. England,

Digitized by Google

weary of the name of Samoa and desirous only to see peace established, was prepared to wink hard during the process and to welcome the result of any German settlement. It was an unpardonable fault in Becker to have kicked and buffeted his ready-made allies into a state of jealousy, anger, and suspicion. Knappe set himself at once to efface these impressions, and the English officials rejoiced for the moment in the change. Between Knappe and de Coetlogon there seems to have been mutual sympathy; and, in considering the steps by which they were led at last into an attitude of mutual defiance, it must be remembered that both the men were sick,—Knappe from time to time prostrated with that formidable complaint, New Guinea fever, and de Coetlogon throughout his whole stay in the islands continually ailing.

Tamasese was still to be recognised and, if possible, supported: such was the German policy. Two days after his arrival, accordingly, Knappe addressed to Mataafa a threatening despatch. The German plantation was suffering from the proximity of his "war-party." He must withdraw from Laulii at once, and, whithersoever he went, he must approach no German property nor so much as any village where there was a German trader. By five o'clock on the morrow, if he were not gone, Knappe would turn upon him "the attention of the man-of-war" and inflict a fine. The same evening, November 14th,

Digitized by Google

Knappe went on board the *Adler*, which began to get up steam.

Three months before, such direct intervention on the part of Germany would have passed almost without protest; but the hour was now gone by. Becker's conduct, equally timid and rash, equally inconclusive and offensive, had forced the other nations into a strong feeling of common interest with Mataafa. Even had the German demands been moderate, de Coetlogon could not have forgotten the night of the *taumualua*, nor how Mataafa had relinquished, at his request, the attack upon the German quarter. Blacklock, with his driver of a captain at his elbow, was not likely to lag behind. And Mataafa having communicated Knappe's letter, the example of the Germans was on all hands exactly followed; the consuls hastened on board their respective war-ships, and these began to get up steam. About midnight, in a pouring rain, Pelly communicated to Fritze his intention to follow him and protect British interests; and Knappe replied that he would come on board the *Lizard* and see de Coetlogon personally. It was deep in the small hours, and de Coetlogon had been long asleep, when he was wakened to receive his colleague; but he started up with an old soldier's readiness. The conference was long. De Coetlogon protested, as he did afterwards in writing, against Knappe's claim: the Samoans were in a state of war; they had territorial rights; it was

Digitized by Google

monstrous to prevent them from entering one of their own villages because a German trader kept the store; and in case property suffered, a claim for compensation was the proper remedy. Knappe argued that this was a question between Germans and Samoans, in which de Coetlogon had nothing to say; and that he must protect German property according to his instructions. To which de Coetlogon replied that he was himself in the same attitude to the property of the British; that he understood Knappe to be intending hostilities against Laulii; that Laulii was mortgaged to the Macarthurs; that its crops were accordingly British property; and that, while he was ever willing to recognise the territorial rights of the Samoans, he must prevent that property from being molested "by any other nation." "But if a German man-of-war does it?" asked Knappe.—"We shall prevent it to the best of our ability," replied the colonel. It is to the credit of both men that this trying interview should have been conducted and concluded without heat; but Knappe must have returned to the *Adler* with darker anticipations.

At sunrise on the morning of the 15th, the three ships, each loaded with its consul, put to sea. It is hard to exaggerate the peril of the forenoon that followed, as they lay off Laulii. Nobody desired a collision, save perhaps the reckless Leary; but peace and war trembled in the balance; and when the *Adler*, at one period,

Digitized by Google

lowered her gun ports, war appeared to preponderate. It proved, however, to be a last—and therefore surely an unwise—extremity. Knappe contented himself with visiting the rival kings, and the three ships returned to Apia before noon. Beyond a doubt, coming after Knappe's decisive letter of the day before, this impotent conclusion shook the credit of Germany among the natives of both sides: the Tamaseses fearing they were deserted, the Mataafas (with secret delight) hoping they were feared. And it gave an impetus to that ridiculous business which might have earned for the whole episode the name of the war of flags. British and American flags had been planted the night before, and were seen that morning flying over what they claimed about Laulii. British and American passengers, on the way up and down, pointed out from the decks of the war-ships, with generous vagueness, the boundaries of problematical estates. Ten days later, the beach of Saluafata bay fluttered (as I have told in the last chapter) with the flag of Germany. The Americans riposted with a claim to Tamasese's camp, some small part of which (says Knappe) did really belong to "an American nigger." The disease spread, the flags were multiplied, the operations of war became an egg-dance among miniature neutral territories; and though all men took a hand in these proceedings, all men in turn were struck with their absurdity. Mullan, Leary's successor, warned Knappe, in an

Digitized by Google

emphatic despatch, not to squander and discredit the solemnity of that emblem which was all he had to be a defence to his own consulate. And Knappe himself in his despatch of March 21st, 1889, castigates the practice with much sense. But this was after the tragi-comic culmination had been reached, and the burnt rags of one of these too-frequently mendacious signals gone on a progress to Washington, like Cæsar's body, arousing indignation where it came. To such results are nations conducted by the patent artifices of a Becker.

The discussion of the morning, the silent menace and defiance of the voyage to Laulii, might have set the best-natured by the ears. But Knappe and de Coetlogon took their difference in excellent part. On the morrow, November 16th, they sat down together with Blacklock in conference. The English consul introduced his colleagues, who shook hands. If Knappe were deadweighted with the inheritance of Becker, Blacklock was handicapped by reminiscences of Leary; it is the more to the credit of this inexperienced man that he should have maintained in the future so excellent an attitude of firmness and moderation, and that when the crash came Knappe and de Coetlogon, not Knappe and Blacklock, were found to be the protagonists of the drama. The conference was futile. The English and American consuls admitted but one cure of the evils of the time: that the farce of the

Digitized by Google

Tamasese monarchy should cease. It was one which the German refused to consider. And the agents separated without reaching any result, save that diplomatic relations had been restored between the States and Germany, and that all three were convinced of their fundamental differences.

Knappe and de Coetlogon were still friends; they had disputed and differed and come within a finger's breadth of war, and they were still friends. But an event was at hand which was to separate them for ever. On December 4th came the *Royalist*, Captain Hand, to relieve the *Lizard*. Pelly of course had to take his canvas from the consulate hospital; but he had in charge certain awnings belonging to the *Royalist*, and with these they made shift to cover the wounded, at that time (after the fight at Laulii) more than usually numerous. A lieutenant came to the consulate, and delivered (as I have received it) the following message: "Captain Hand's compliments, and he says you must get rid of these niggers at once, and he will help you to do it." Doubtless the reply was no more civil than the message. The promised "help," at least, followed promptly. A boat's crew landed and the awnings were stripped from the wounded, Hand himself standing on the colonel's verandah to direct operations. It were fruitless to discuss this passage from the humanitarian point of view, or from that of formal courtesy. The mind of the

Digitized by Google

new captain was plainly not directed to these objects. But it is understood that he considered the existence of the hospital a source of irritation to Germans and a fault in policy. His own rude act proved in the result far more impolitic. The hospital had now been open some two months, and de Coetlogon was still on friendly terms with Knappe, and he and his wife were engaged to dine with him that day. By the morrow that was practically ended. For the rape of the awnings had two results: one, which was the fault of de Coetlogon, not at all of Hand, who could not have foreseen it; the other which it was his duty to have seen and prevented. The first was this: the de Coetlogons found themselves left with their wounded exposed to the inclemencies of the season; they must all be transported to the house and verandah; in the distress and pressure of this task, the dinner engagement was too long forgotten; and a note of excuse did not reach the German consulate before the table was set, and Knappe dressed to receive his visitors. The second consequence was inevitable. Captain Hand was scarce landed ere it became public (was "*sofort bekannt*," writes Knappe) that he and the consul were in opposition. All that had been gained by the demonstration at Laulii was thus immediately cast away; de Coetlogon's prestige was lessened; and it must be said plainly that Hand did less than nothing to restore it. Twice indeed he interfered, both times with success;

Digitized by Google

and once, when his own person had been endangered, with vehemence; but during all the strange doings I have to narrate, he remained in close intimacy with the German consulate, and on one occasion may be said to have acted as its marshal. After the worst is over, after Bismarck has told Knappe that "the protests of his English colleague were grounded," that his own conduct "has not been good," and that in any dispute which may arise he "will find himself in the wrong," Knappe can still plead in his defence that Captain Hand "has always maintained friendly intercourse with the German authorities." Singular epitaph for an English sailor. In this complicity on the part of Hand, we may find the reason—and I had almost said, the excuse—of much that was excessive in the bearing of the unfortunate Knappe.

On the 11th December, Mataafa received twenty-eight thousand cartridges, brought into the country in salt-beef kegs by the British ship *Richmond*. This not only sharpened the animosity between whites: following so closely on the German fizzle at Laulii, it raised a convulsion in the camp of Tamasese. On the 13th, Brandeis addressed to Knappe his famous and fatal letter. I may not describe it as a letter of burning words, but it is plainly dictated by a burning heart. Tamasese and his chiefs, he announces, are now sick of the business and ready to make peace with Mataafa. They began the

Digitized by Google

war relying upon German help; they now see and say that "*e faaalo Siamani i Peritania ma America*, that Germany is subservient to England and the States." It is grimly given to be understood that the despatch is an ultimatum, and a last chance is being offered for the recreant ally to fulfil her pledge. To make it the more plain, the document goes on with a kind of bilious irony: "The two German war-ships now in Samoa are here for the protection of German property alone; and when the *Olga* shall have arrived" [she arrived on the morrow] "the German war-ships will continue to do against the insurgents precisely as little as they have done heretofore." Plant flags, in fact.

Here was Knappe's opportunity, could he have stooped to seize it. I find it difficult to blame him that he could not. Far from so inglorious as the treachery once contemplated by Becker, the acceptance of the ultimatum would have been still in the nature of a disgrace. Brandeis's letter, written by a German, was hard to swallow. It would have been hard to accept that solution which Knappe had so recently and so peremptorily refused to his brother consuls. And he was tempted, on the other hand, by recent changes. There was no Pelly to support de Coetlogen, who might now be disregarded. Mullen, Leary's successor, even if he were not precisely a Hand, was at least no Leary; and even if Mullen should show fight, Knappe had now three ships and

Digitized by Google

could defy or sink him without danger. Many small circumstances moved him in the same direction. The looting of German plantations continued; the whole force of Mataafa to a large extent subsisted from the crops of Vailele; and armed men were to be seen openly plundering bananas, breadfruit, and cocoa-nuts under the walls of the plantation building. On the night of the 13th, the consulate stables had been broken into and a horse removed. On the 16th, there was a riot in Apia between half-castes and sailors from the new ship *Olga*, each side claiming that the other was the worse of drink, both (for a wager) justly. The multiplication of flags and little neutral territories had, besides, begun to irritate the Samoans. The protests of German settlers had been received uncivilly. On the 16th, the Mataafas had again sought to land in Saluafata bay, with the manifest intention to attack the Tamaseses, or (in other words) "to trespass on German lands, covered, as your excellency knows, with flags." I quote from his requisition to Fritze, December 17th. Upon all these considerations, he goes on, it is necessary to bring the fighting to an end. Both parties are to be disarmed and returned to their villages —Mataafa first. And in case of any attempt upon Apia, the roads thither are to be held by a strong landing party. Mataafa was to be disarmed first, perhaps rightly enough in his character of the last insurgent. Then was to have

Digitized by Google

come the turn of Tamasese; but it does not appear the disarming would have had the same import or have been gone about in the same way. Germany was bound to Tamasese. No honest man would dream of blaming Knappe because he sought to redeem his country's word. The path he chose was doubtless that of honour, so far as honour was still left. But it proved to be the road to ruin.

Fritze, ranking German officer, is understood to have opposed the measure. His attitude earned him at the time unpopularity among his country-people on the spot, and should now redound to his credit. It is to be hoped he extended his opposition to some of the details. If it were possible to disarm Mataafa at all, it must be done rather by prestige than force. A party of blue-jackets landed in Samoan bush, and expected to hold against Samoans a multiplicity of forest paths, had their work cut out for them. And it was plain they should be landed in the light of day, with a discouraging openness and even with parade. To sneak ashore by night was to increase the danger of resistance and to minimise the authority of the attack. The thing was a bluff, and it is impossible to bluff with stealth. Yet this was what was tried. A landing party was to leave the *Olga* in Apia bay at two in the morning; the landing was to be at four on two parts of the foreshore of Vailele. At eight they were to be joined by a second landing party

Digitized by Google

from the *Eber*. By nine the Olgas were to be on the crest of Letongo Mountain, and the Ebers to be moving round the promontory by the seaward paths, "with measures of precaution," disarming all whom they encountered. There was to be no firing unless fired upon. At the appointed hour (or perhaps later) on the morning of the 19th, this unpromising business was put in hand, and there moved off from the *Olga* two boats with some fifty blue-jackets between them, and a *praam* or punt containing ninety,—the boats and the whole expedition under the command of Captain-Lieutenant Jaeckel, the praam under Lieutenant Spengler. The men had each forty rounds, one day's provisions, and their flasks filled.

In the meanwhile, Mataafa sympathisers about Apia were on the alert. Knappe had informed the consuls that the ships were to put to sea next day for the protection of German property; but the Tamaseses had been less discreet. "To-morrow at the hour of seven," they had cried to their adversaries, "you will know of a difficulty, and our guns shall be made good in broken bones." An accident had pointed expectation towards Apia. The wife of Le Māmea washed for the German ships—a perquisite, I suppose, for her husband's unwilling fidelity. She sent a man with linen on board the *Adler*, where he was surprised to see Le Māmea in person, and to be himself ordered instantly on shore. The news

Digitized by Google

spread. If Māmea were brought down from Lotonauu, others might have come at the same time. Tamasese himself and half his army might perhaps lie concealed on board the German ships. And a watch was accordingly set and warriors collected along the line of the shore. One detachment lay in some rifle-pits by the mouth of the Fuisá. They were commanded by Seumanu; and with this party, probably as the most contiguous to Apia, was the war-correspondent, John Klein. Of English birth, but naturalised American, this gentleman had been for some time representing the *New York World* in a very effective manner, always in the front, living in the field with the Samoans, and in all vicissitudes of weather, toiling to and fro with his despatches. His wisdom was perhaps not equal to his energy. He made himself conspicuous, going about armed to the teeth in a boat under the stars and stripes; and on one occasion, when he supposed himself fired upon by the Tamaseses, had the petulance to empty his revolver in the direction of their camp. By the light of the moon, which was then nearly down, this party observed the *Olga's* two boats and the praam, which they describe as "almost sinking with men," the boats keeping well out towards the reef, the praam at the moment apparently heading for the shore. An extreme agitation seems to have reigned in the rifle-pits. What were the new-comers? What was their errand? Were they Germans or Tama-

Digitized by Google

seses? Had they a mind to attack? The praam was hailed in Samoan and did not answer. It was proposed to fire upon her ere she draw near. And at last, whether on his own suggestion or that of Seumanu, Klein hailed her in English and in terms of unnecessary melodrama. "Do not try to land here," he cried. "If you do your blood will be upon your head." Spengler, who had never the least intention to touch at the Fuisá, put up the head of the praam to her true course and continued to move up the lagoon with an offing of some seventy or eighty yards. Along all the irregularities and obstructions of the beach, across the mouth of the Vaivasa, and through the startled village of Matafangatele, Seumanu, Klein, and seven or eight others raced to keep up, spreading the alarm and rousing reenforcements as they went. Presently a man on horseback made his appearance on the opposite beach of Fangalii. Klein and the natives distinctly saw him signal with a lantern; which is the more strange, as the horseman (Captain Hufnagel, plantation manager of Vailele) had never a lantern to signal with. The praam kept in. Many men in white were seen to stand up, step overboard, and wade to shore. At the same time the eye of panic descried a breastwork of "foreign stones" (brick) upon the beach. Samoans are prepared to-day to swear to its existence, I believe conscientiously, although no such thing was ever made or ever intended in

Digitized by Google

that place. The hour is doubtful. "It was the hour when the streak of dawn is seen, the hour known in the warfare of heathen times as the hour of the night attack," says the Mataafa official account. A native whom I met on the field declared it was at cockcrow. Captain Hufnagel, on the other hand, is sure it was long before the day. It was dark at least, and the moon down. Darkness made the Samoans bold; uncertainty as to the composition and purpose of the landing party made them desperate. Fire was opened on the Germans, one of whom was here killed. The Germans returned it and effected a lodgement on the beach; and the skirmish died again to silence. It was at this time, if not earlier, that Klein returned to Apia.

Here, then, were Spengler and the ninety men of the praam, landed on the beach in no very enviable posture, the woods in front filled with unnumbered enemies, but for the time successful. Meanwhile, Jaeckel and the boats had gone outside the reef, and were to land on the other side of the Vailele promontory, at Sunga, by the buildings of the plantation. It was Hufnagel's part to go and meet them. His way led straight into the woods and through the midst of the Samoans, who had but now ceased firing. He went in the saddle and at a foot's pace, feeling speed and concealment to be equally helpless, and that if he were to fall at all, he had best fall with dignity. Not a shot was fired at him; no

Digitized by Google

effort made to arrest him on his errand. As he went, he spoke and even jested with the Samoans, and they answered in good part. One fellow was leaping, yelling, and tossing his axe in the air, after the way of an excited islander. *Faimalosi!* go it!" said Hufnagel, and the fellow laughed and redoubled his exertions. As soon as the boats entered the lagoon, fire was again opened from the woods. The fifty blue-jackets jumped overboard, hove down the boats to be a shield, and dragged them towards the landing place. In this way, their rations, and (what was more unfortunate) some of their miserable provision of forty rounds got wetted; but the men came to shore and garrisoned the plantation house without a casualty. Meanwhile the sound of the firing from Sunga immediately renewed the hostilities at Fangalii. The civilians on shore decided that Spengler must be at once guided to the house, and Haideln, the surveyor, accepted the dangerous errand. Like Hufnagel, he was suffered to pass without question through the midst of these platonic enemies. He found Spengler some way inland on a knoll, disastrously engaged, the woods around him filled with Samoans, who were continuously re-enforced. In three successive charges, cheering as they ran, the blue-jackets burst through their scattered opponents, and made good their junction with Jaeckel. Four men only remained upon the field, the other wounded being helped by their

Digitized by Google

comrades or dragging themselves painfully along.

The force was now concentrated in the house and its immediate patch of garden. Their rear, to the seaward, was unmolested; but on three sides they were beleagured. On the left, the Samoans occupied and fired from some of the plantation offices. In front, a long rising crest of land in the horse-pasture commanded the house and was lined with the assailants. And on the right, the hedge of the same paddock afforded them a dangerous cover. It was in this place that a Samoan sharp-shooter was knocked over by Jaeckel with his own hand. The fire was maintained by the Samoans in the usual wasteful style. The roof was made a sieve; the balls passed clean through the house; Lieutenant Sieger, as he lay, already dying, on Hufnagel's bed, was despatched with a fresh wound. The Samoans showed themselves extremely enterprising: pushed their lines forward, ventured beyond cover, and continually threatened to envelop the garden. Thrice, at least, it was necessary to repel them by a sally. The men were brought into the house from the rear, the front doors were thrown suddenly open, and the gallant bluejackets issued cheering: necessary, successful, but extremely costly sorties. Neither could these be pushed far. The foes were undaunted; so soon as the sailors advanced at all deep in the horse-pasture, the Samoans began to close in upon both flanks; and the sally had to be recalled. To add

Digitized by Google

to the dangers of the German situation, ammunition began to run low; and the cartridge-boxes of the wounded and the dead had been already brought in use before, at about eight o'clock, the *Eber* steamed into the bay. Her commander, Wallis, threw some shells into Letongo, one of which killed five men about their cooking-pot. The Samoans began immediately to withdraw; their movements were hastened by a sortie, and the remains of the landing party brought on board. This was an unfortunate movement; it gave an irremediable air of defeat to what might have been else claimed for a moderate success. The blue-jackets numbered a hundred and forty all told; they were engaged separately and fought under the worst conditions, in the dark and among woods; their position in the house was scarce tenable; they lost in killed and wounded fifty-six,—forty per cent; and their spirit to the end was above question. Whether we think of the poor sailor lads, always so pleasantly behaved in times of peace, or whether we call to mind the behaviour of the two civilians, Haideln and Hufnagel, we can only regret that brave men should stand to be exposed upon so poor a quarrel or lives cast away upon an enterprise so hopeless.

News of the affair reached Apia early, and Moors, always curious of these spectacles of war, was immediately in the saddle. Near Matafangatele, he met a Manono chief, whom he asked if there were any German dead. "I think there

Digitized by Google

are about thirty of them knocked over," said he.—"Have you taken their heads?" asked Moors.—"Yes," said the chief. "Some foolish people did it, but I have stopped them. We ought not to cut off their heads when they do not cut off ours." He was asked what had been done with the heads. "Two have gone to Mataafa," he replied, "and one is buried right under where your horse is standing, in a basket wrapped in tapa." This was afterwards dug up, and I am told on native authority that, besides the three heads, two ears were taken. Moors next asked the Manono man how he came to be going away. "The man-of-war is throwing shells," said he. "When they stopped firing out of the house, we stopped firing also; so it was as well to scatter when the shells began. We could have killed all the white men. I wish they had been Tamaseses." This is an *ex parte* statement, and I give it for such; but the course of the affair, and in particular the adventures of Haideln and Hufnagel, testify to a surprising lack of animosity against the Germans. About the same time or but a little earlier than this conversation, the same spirit was being displayed. Hufnagel, with a party of labourers, had gone out to bring in the German dead, when he was surprised to be suddenly fired on from the wood. The boys he had with him were not negritos, but Polynesians from the Gilbert Islands; and he suddenly remembered that these might be easily mistaken for a de-

Digitized by Google

tachment of Tamaseses. Bidding his boys conceal themselves in a thicket, this brave man walked into the open. So soon as he was recognised, the firing ceased, and the labourers followed him in safety. This is chivalrous war; but there was a side to it less chivalrous. As Moors drew nearer to Vailele, he began to meet Samoans with hats, guns, and even shirts taken from the German sailors. With one of these who had a hat and a gun, he stopped and spoke. The hat was handed up for him to look at; it had the late owner's name on the inside. "Where is he?" asked Moors.—"He is dead; I cut his head off." —"You shot him?" —"No, somebody else shot him in the hip. When I came, he put up his hands, and cried: 'Don't kill me; I am a Malietoa man.' I did not believe him, and I cut his head off."—"Have you any ammunition to fit that gun?"—"I do not know."—"What has become of the cartridge belt?" —"Another fellow grabbed that and the cartridges, and he won't give them to me." A dreadful and silly picture of barbaric war. The words of the German sailor must be regarded as imaginary: how was the poor lad to speak native, or the Samoan to understand German? When Moors came as far as Sunga, the *Eber* was yet in the bay, the smoke of battle still lingered among the trees, which were themselves marked with a thousand bullet-wounds. But the affair was over, the combatants, German and Samoan, were all gone, and

Digitized by Google

only a couple of negrito labour boys lurked on the scene. The village of Letongo beyond was equally silent; part of it was wrecked by the shells of the *Eber*, and still smoked; the inhabitants had fled. On the beach were the native boats, perhaps five thousand dollars' worth, deserted by the Mataafas and overlooked by the Germans, in their common hurry to escape. Still Moors held eastward by the sea-paths. It was his hope to get a view from the other side of the promontory, towards Laulii. In the way he found a house hidden in the wood and among rocks, where an aged and sick woman was being tended by her elderly daughter. Last lingerers in that deserted piece of coast, they seemed indifferent to the events which had thus left them solitary, and, as the daughter said, did not know where Mataafa was, nor where Tamasese.

It is the official Samoan pretension that the Germans fired first at Fangalii. In view of all German and some native testimony, the text of Fritze's orders, and the probabilities of the case, no honest mind will believe it for a moment. Certainly the Samoans fired first. As certainly they were betrayed into the engagement in the agitation of the moment, and it was not till afterwards that they understood what they had done. Then, indeed, all Samoa drew a breath of wonder and delight. The invincible had fallen; the men of the vaunted war-ships had been met in the field by the braves of Mataafa: a superstition

Digitized by Google

was no more. Conceive this people steadily as schoolboys; and conceive the elation in any school if the head boy should suddenly arise and drive the rector from the schoolhouse. I have received one instance of the feeling instantly aroused. There lay at the time in the consular hospital an old chief who was a pet of the colonel's. News reached him of the glorious event; he was sick, he thought himself sinking, sent for the colonel, and gave him his gun. "Don't let the Germans get it," said the old gentleman, and having received a promise, was at peace.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

"FUROR CONSULARIS"

December, 1888, to March, 1889

KNAPPE, in the *Adler*, with a flag of truce at the fore, was entering Laulii Bay when the *Eber* brought him the news of the night's reverse. His heart was doubtless wrung for his young countrymen who had been butchered and mutilated in the dark woods, or now lay suffering and some of them dying on the ship. And he must have been startled as he recognised his own position. He had gone too far; he had stumbled into war and, what was worse, into defeat; he had thrown away German lives for less than nothing, and now saw himself condemned either to accept defeat, or to kick and pummel his failure into something like success; either to accept defeat, or take frenzy for a counsellor. Yesterday, in cold blood, he had judged it necessary to have the woods to the westward guarded lest the evacuation of Laulii should prove only the peril of Apia. To-day, in the irritation and alarm of failure, he forgot or despised his previous reasoning, and, though his detachment was beat back

Digitized by Google

to the ships, proceeded with the remainder of his maimed design. The only change he made was to hand down the flag of truce. He had now no wish to meet with Mataafa. Words were out of season, shells must speak.

At this moment an incident befell him which must have been trying to his self-command. The new American ship *Nipsic* entered Laulii Bay; her commander, Mullan, boarded the *Adler* to protest, succeeded in wresting from Knappe a period of delay in order that the women might be spared, and sent a lieutenant to Mataafa with a warning. The camp was already excited by the news and the trophies of Fangalii. Already Tamasese and Lotoanuu seemed secondary objectives to the Germans and Apia. Mullan's message set an end to hesitation. Laulii was evacuated. The troops streamed westward by the mountain-side, and took up the same day a strong position about Tanungamanono and Mangiangi, some two miles behind Apia, which they threatened with the one hand, while with the other they continued to draw their supplies from the devoted plantations of the German firm. Laulii, when it was shelled, was empty. The British flags were, of course, fired upon; and I hear that one of them was struck down, but I think every one must be privately of the mind that it was fired upon and fell, in a place where it had little business to be shown.

Such was the military epilogue to the ill-

Digitized by Google

judged adventure of Fangalii; it was difficult for failure to be more complete. But the other consequences were of a darker colour and brought the whites immediately face to face in a spirit of ill-favoured animosity. Knappe was mourning the defeat and death of his countryfolk, he was standing aghast over the ruin of his own career, when Mullan boarded him. The successor of Leary served himself, in that bitter moment, heir to Leary's part. And in Mullan, Knappe saw more even than the successor of Leary,—he saw in him the representative of Klein. Klein had hailed the praam from the rifle-pits; he had there uttered ill-chosen words, unhappily prophetic; it is even likely that he was present at the time of the first fire. To accuse him of the design and conduct of the whole attack was but a step forward; his own vapouring served to corroborate the accusation; and it was not long before the German consulate was in possession of sworn native testimony in support. The worth of native testimony is small, the worth of white testimony not overwhelming; and I am in the painful position of not being able to subscribe either to Klein's own account of the affair or to that of his accusers. Klein was extremely flurried; his interest as a reporter must have tempted him at first to make the most of his share in the exploit, the immediate peril in which he soon found himself to stand must have at least suggested to him the idea of minimising it;

Digitized by Google

one way and another, he is not a good witness. As for the natives, they were no doubt cross-examined in that hall of terror, the German consulate, where they might be trusted to lie like schoolboys, or (if the reader prefer it) like Samoans. By outside white testimony, it remains established for me that Klein returned to Apia either before or immediately after the first shots. That he ever sought or was ever allowed a share in the command may be denied peremptorily; but it is more than likely that he expressed himself in an excited manner and with a highly inflammatory effect upon his hearers. He was, at least, severely punished. The Germans, enraged by his provocative behaviour and what they thought to be his German birth, demanded him to be tried before court-martial; he had to skulk inside the sentries of the American consulate, to be smuggled on board a war-ship, and to be carried almost by stealth out of the island; and what with the agitations of his mind, and the results of a marsh fever contracted in the lines of Mataafa, reached Honolulu a very proper object of commiseration. Nor was Klein the only accused: de Coetlogon was himself involved. As the boats passed Matautu, Knappe declares a signal was made from the British consulate. Perhaps we should rather read "from its neighbourhood"; since, in the general warding of the coast, the point of Matautu could scarce have been neglected. On the other hand, there is no

Digitized by Google

doubt that the Samoans, in the anxiety of that night of watching and fighting, crowded to the friendly consul for advice. Late in the night, the wounded Siteoni, lying on the colonel's verandah, one corner of which had been blinded down that he might sleep, heard the coming and going of bare feet and the voices of eager consultation. And long after, a man who had been discharged from the colonel's employment took upon himself to swear an affidavit as to the nature of the advice then given, and to carry the document to the German consul. It was an act of private revenge; it fell long out of date in the good days of Dr. Stuebel, and had no result but to discredit the gentleman who volunteered it. Colonel de Coetlogon had his faults, but they did not touch his honour; his bare word would always outweigh a waggonload of such denunciations; and he declares his behaviour on that night to have been blameless. The question was besides inquired into on the spot by Sir John Thurston, and the colonel honourably acquitted. But during the weeks that were now to follow, Knappe believed the contrary; he believed not only that Moors and others had supplied the ammunition and Klein commanded in the field, but that de Coetlogon had made the signal of attack; that though his blue-jackets had bled and fallen against the arms of Samoans, these were supplied, inspired, and marshalled by Americans and English.

Digitized by Google

The legend was the more easily believed because it embraced and was founded upon so much truth. Germans lay dead, the German wounded groaned in their cots; and the cartridges by which they fell had been sold by an American and brought into the country in a British bottom. Had the transaction been entirely mercenary, it would already have been hard to swallow; but it was notoriously not so. British and Americans were notoriously the partisans of Mataafa. They rejoiced in the result of Fangalii, and so far from seeking to conceal their rejoicing, paraded and displayed it. Calumny ran high. Before the dead were buried, while the wounded yet lay in pain and fever, cowardly accusations of cowardice were levelled at the German bluejackets. It was said they had broken and run before their enemies, and that they had huddled helpless like sheep in the plantation house. Small wonder if they had; small wonder had they been utterly destroyed. But the fact was heroically otherwise; and these dastard calumnies cut to the blood. They are not forgotten; perhaps they will never be forgiven.

In the meanwhile, events were pressing towards a still more trenchant opposition. On the 20th, the three consuls met and parted without agreement, Knappe announcing that he had lost men and must take the matter in his own hands to avenge their death. On the 21st, the *Olga* came before Matafangatele, ordered the delivery

Digitized by Google

of all arms within the hour, and at the end of that period, none being brought, shelled and burned the village. The shells fell for the most part innocuous; an eyewitness saw children at play beside the flaming houses; not a soul was injured; and the one noteworthy event was the mutilation of Captain Hamilton's American flag. In one sense an incident too small to be chronicled, in another this was of historic interest and import. These rags of tattered bunting occasioned the display of a new sentiment in the United States; and the republic of the west, hitherto so apathetic and unwieldy, but already stung by German nonchalance, leaped to its feet for the first time at the news of this fresh insult. As though to make the inefficacy of the war-ships more apparent, three shells were thrown inland at Mangiangi; they flew high over the Mataafa camp, where the natives could "hear them singing" as they flew, and fell behind in the deep romantic valley of the Vaisingano. Mataafa had been already summoned on board the *Adler;* his life promised if he came, declared "in danger" if he came not; and he had declined in silence the unattractive invitation. These fresh hostile acts showed him that the worst had come. He was in strength, his force posted along the whole front of the mountain behind Apia, Matautu occupied, the Siumu road lined up to the houses of the town with warriors passionate for war. The occasion was unique,

Digitized by Google

and there is no doubt that he designed to seize it. The same day of this bombardment, he sent word bidding all English and Americans wear a black band upon their arm, so that his men should recognise and spare them. The hint was taken, and the band worn for a continuance of days. To have refused would have been insane; but to consent was unhappily to feed the resentment of the Germans by a fresh sign of intelligence with their enemies, and to widen the breach between the races by a fresh and a scarce pardonable mark of their division. The same day again the Germans repeated one of their earlier offences by firing on a boat within the harbour. Times were changed; they were now at war and in peril, the rigour of military advantage might well be seized by them and pardoned by others; but it so chanced that the bullets flew about the ears of Captain Hand, and that commander is said to have been insatiable of apologies. The affair, besides, had a deplorable effect on the inhabitants. A black band (they saw) might protect them from the Mataafas, not from undiscriminating shots. Panic ensued. The war-ships were open to receive the fugitives, and the gentlemen who had made merry over Fangalii were sent to thrust each other from the wharves in their eagerness to flee Apia. I willingly drop the curtain on the shameful picture.

Meanwhile, on the German side of the bay, a more manly spirit was exhibited in circumstances

Digitized by Google

of alarming weakness. The plantation managers and overseers had all retreated to Matafele, only one (I understand) remaining at his post. The whole German colony was thus collected in one spot, and could count and wonder at its scanty numbers. Knappe declares (to my surprise) that the war-ships could not spare him more than fifty men a day. The great extension of the German quarter, he goes on, did not "allow a full occupation of the outer line"; hence they had shrunk into the western end by the firm buildings, and the inhabitants were warned to fall back on this position, in the case of an alert. So that he who had set forth, a day or so before, to disarm the Mataafas in the open field, now found his resources scarce adequate to garrison the buildings of the firm. But Knappe seemed unteachable by fate. It is probable he thought he had

> "Already waded in so deep,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er";

it is certain that he continued, on the scene of his defeat and in the midst of his weakness, to bluster and menace like a conqueror. Active war, which he lacked the means of attempting, was continually threatened. On the 22d, he sought the aid of his brother consuls to maintain the neutral territory against Mataafa; and at the same time, as though meditating instant deeds of prowess, refused to be bound by it himself.

Digitized by Google

This singular proposition was, of course, refused: Blacklock remarking that he had no fear of the natives, if these were let alone; de Coetlogon refusing in the circumstances to recognise any neutral territory at all. In vain Knappe amended and baited his proposal with the offer of forty-eight or ninety-six hours' notice, according as his objective should be near or within the boundary of the *Eleele Sa*. It was rejected; and he learned that he must accept war with all its consequences—and not that which he desired—war with the immunities of peace.

This monstrous exigence illustrates the man's frame of mind. It has been still further illuminated in the German white book by printing alongside of his despatches those of the unimpassioned Fritze. On January 8th, the consulate was destroyed by fire. Knappe says it was the work of incendiaries, "without doubt," Fritze admits that "everything seems to show" it was an accident. "Tamaseses' people fit to bear arms," writes Knappe, "are certainly for the moment equal to Mataafa's," though restrained from battle by the lack of ammunition. "As for Tamasese," says Fritze of the same date, "he is now but a phantom—*dient er nur als Gespenst*. His party, for practical purposes, is no longer large. They pretend ammunition to be lacking, but what they lack most is good-will. Captain Brandeis, whose influence is now small, declares they can no longer sustain a serious en-

Digitized by Google

gagement, and is himself in the intention of leaving Samoa by the *Lübeck* of the 5th of February." And Knappe, in the same despatch, confutes himself and confirms the testimony of his naval colleague, by the admission that "the re-establishment of Tamasese's government is, under present circumstances, not to be thought of." Plainly, then, he was not so much seeking to deceive others, as he was himself possessed; and we must regard the whole series of his acts and despatches as the agitations of a fever.

The British steamer *Richmond* returned to Apia, January 15th. On the last voyage she had brought the ammunition already so frequently referred to; as a matter of fact, she was again bringing contraband of war. It is necessary to be explicit upon this, which served as spark to so great a flame of scandal. Knappe was justified in interfering; he would have been worthy of all condemnation if he had neglected, in his posture of semi-investment, a precaution so elementary; and the manner in which he set about attempting it was conciliatory and almost timid. He applied to Captain Hand, and begged him to accept himself the duty of "controlling" the discharge of the *Richmond's* cargo. Hand was unable to move without his consul; and at night, an armed boat from the Germans boarded, searched, and kept possession of, the suspected ship. The next day, as by an afterthought, war and martial law were proclaimed for the Samo-

Digitized by Google

an Islands, the introduction of contraband of war forbidden, and ships and boats declared liable to search. "All support of the rebels will be punished by martial law," continued the proclamation, "no matter to what nationality the person [*Thäter*] may belong."

Hand, it has been seen, declined to act in the matter of the *Richmond* without the concurrence of his consul; but I have found no evidence that either Hand or Knappe communicated with de Coetlogon, with whom they were both at daggers drawn. First the seizure and next the proclamation seem to have burst on the English consul from a clear sky; and he wrote on the same day, throwing doubt on Knappe's authority to declare war. Knappe replied on the 20th that the Imperial German government had been at war as a matter of fact since December 19th, and that it was only for the convenience of the subjects of other states that he had been empowered to make a formal declaration. "From that moment," he added, "martial law prevails in Samoa." De Coetlogon instantly retorted, declining martial law for British subjects, and announcing a proclamation in that sense. Instantly, again, came that astonishing document, Knappe's rejoinder, without pause, without reflection—the pens screeching on the paper, the messengers (you would think) running from consulate to consulate: "I have had the honour to receive your excellency's [*Hochwohlgeboren*] agreeable commu-

Digitized by Google

nication of to-day. Since, on the ground of received instructions, martial law has been declared in Samoa, British subjects as well as others fall under its application. I warn you therefore to abstain from such a proclamation as you announce in your letter. It will be such a piece of business as shall make yourself answerable under martial law. Besides, your proclamation will be disregarded." De Coetlogon of course issued his proclamation at once, Knappe retorted with another, and night closed on the first stage of this insane collision. I hear the German consul was on this day prostrated with fever; charity at least must suppose him hardly answerable for his language.

Early on the 21st, Mr. Mansfield Gallien, a passing traveller, was seized in his berth on board the *Richmond*, and carried, half-dressed, on board a German war-ship. His offence was, in the circumstances and after the proclamation, substantial. He had gone the day before, in the spirit of a tourist, to Mataafa's camp, had spoken with the king, and had even recommended him an appeal to Sir George Grey. Fritze, I gather, had been long uneasy; this arrest on board a British ship filled the measure. Doubtless, as he had written long before, the consul alone was responsible "on the legal side"; but the captain began to ask himself, "What next?"—telegraphed direct home for instructions, "Is arrest of foreigners on foreign vessels legal?"—and was

Digitized by Google

charge his dangerous prisoner. The word in question (so the story goes) was not without a kind of wit. "I wish you would set that man ashore," Hand is reported to have said, indicating Gallien; "I wish you would set that man ashore, to save me the trouble." The same day, de Coetlogon published a proclamation requesting captains to submit to search for contraband of war.

On the 22d, the *Samoa Times and South Sea Advertiser* was suppressed by order of Fritze. I have hitherto refrained from mentioning the single paper of our islands, that I might deal with it once for all. It is of course a tiny sheet; but I have often had occasion to wonder at the ability of its articles, and almost always at the decency of its tone. Officials may at times be a little roughly, and at times a little captiously criticised; private persons are habitually respected; and there are many papers in England, and still more in the States, even of leading organs in chief cities, that might envy, and would do well to imitate, the courtesy and discretion of the *Samoa Times*. Yet the editor, Cusack, is only an amateur in journalism, and a carpenter by trade. His chief fault is one perhaps inevitable in so small a place—that he seems a little in the leading of a clique; but his interest in the public weal is genuine and generous. One man's meat is another man's poison: Anglo-Saxons and Germans

have been differently brought up. To our galled experience the paper appears moderate; to their untried sensations it seems violent. We think a public man fair game; we think it a part of his duty, and I am told he finds it a part of his reward, to be continually canvassed by the press. For the Germans, on the other hand, an official wears a certain sacredness; when he is called over the coals, they are shocked, and (if the official be a German) feel that Germany itself has been insulted. The *Samoa Times* had been long a mountain of offence. Brandeis had imported from the colonies another printer of the name of Jones, to deprive Cusack of the government printing. German sailors had come ashore one day, wild with offended patriotism, to punish the editor with stripes, and the result was delightfully amusing. The champions asked for the English printer. They were shown the wrong man, and the blows intended for Cusack had hailed on the shoulders of his rival Jones. On the 12th, Cusack had reprinted an article from a San Francisco paper; the Germans had complained; and de Coetlogon, in a moment of weakness, had fined the editor twenty pounds. The judgment was afterwards reversed in Fiji; but even at the time it had not satisfied the Germans. And so now, on the third day of martial law, the paper was suppressed. Here we have another of these international obscurities. To Fritze, the step seemed natural and obvious; for Anglo-

Digitized by Google

Saxons, it was a hand laid upon the altar; and the month was scarce out before the voice of Senator Frye announced to his colleagues that free speech had been suppressed in Samoa.

Perhaps we must seek some similar explanation for Fritze's short-lived code, published and withdrawn the next day, the 23d. Fritz himself was in no humour for extremities. He was much in the position of a lieutenant who should perceive his captain urging the ship upon the rocks. It is plain he had lost all confidence in his commanding officer "upon the legal side"; and we find him writing home with anxious candour. He had understood that martial law implied military possession; he was in military possession of nothing but his ship, and shrewdly suspected that his martial jurisdiction should be confined within the same limits. "As a matter of fact," he writes, "we do not occupy the territory and cannot give foreigners the necessary protection, because Mataafa and his people can at any moment forcibly interrupt me in my jurisdiction." Yet in the eyes of Anglo-Saxons the severity of his code appeared burlesque. I give but three of its provisions. The crime of inciting German troops "by any means, as, for instance, informing them of proclamations by the enemy," was punishable with death; that of "publishing or secretly distributing anything, whether printed or written, bearing on the war," with prison or deportation; and that of calling or

Digitized by Google

attending a public meeting, unless permitted, with the same. Such were the tender mercies of Knappe, lurking in the western end of the German quarter, where Mataafa could "at any moment" interrupt his jurisdiction.

On the 22d (day of the suppression of the *Times*), de Coetlogon wrote to inquire if hostilities were intended against Great Britain, which Knappe on the same day denied. On the 23d, de Coetlogon sent a complaint of hostile acts, such as the armed and forcible entry of the *Richmond* before the declaration and the arrest of Gallien. In his reply, dated the 24th, Knappe took occasion to repeat, although now with more self-command, his former threat against de Coetlogon. "I am still of the opinion," he writes, "that even foreign consuls are liable to the application of martial law, if they are guilty of offences against the belligerent state." The same day (24th), de Coetlogon complained that Fletcher, manager for Messrs. Macarthur, had been summoned by Fritze. In answer, Knappe had "the honour to inform your Excellency that since the declaration of the state of war, British subjects are liable to martial law, and Mr. Fletcher will be arrested if he does not appear." Here, then, was the gauntlet thrown down, and de Coetlogon was burning to accept it. Fletcher's offence was this. Upon the 22d, a steamer had come in from Wellington, specially chartered to bring German despatches to Apia. The rumour

Digitized by Google

came along with her from New Zealand that in these despatches Knappe would find himself rebuked, and Fletcher was accused of having "interested himself in the spreading of this rumour." His arrest was actually ordered, when Hand succeeded in persuading him to surrender. At the German court, the case was dismissed "*wegen Nichtigkeit*"; and the acute stage of these distempers may be said to have ended. Blessed are the peacemakers. Hand had perhaps averted a collision. What is more certain, he had offered to the world a perfectly original reading of the part of British seaman.

Hand may have averted a collision, I say; but I am tempted to believe otherwise. I am tempted to believe that the threat to arrest Fletcher was the last mutter of the declining tempest and a mere sop to Knappe's self-respect. I am tempted to believe the rumour in question was substantially correct, and the steamer from Wellington had really brought the German consul grounds for hesitation, if not orders to retreat. I believe the unhappy man to have awakened from a dream, and to have read ominous writing on the wall. An enthusiastic popularity surrounded him among the Germans. It was natural. Consul and colony had passed through an hour of serious peril, and the consul had set the example of undaunted courage. He was entertained at dinner. Fritze, who was known to have secretly opposed him, was scorned and

Digitized by Google

avoided. But the clerks of the German firm were one thing, Prince Bismarck was another; and on a cold review of these events, it is not improbable that Knappe may have envied the position of his naval colleague. It is certain, at least, that he set himself to shuffle and capitulate; and when the blow fell, he was able to reply that the martial law business had in the meanwhile come right; that the English and American consular courts stood open for ordinary cases; and that in different conversations with Captain Hand, "who has always maintained friendly intercourse with the German authorities," it had been repeatedly explained that only the supply of weapons and ammunition, or similar aid and support, was to come under German martial law. Was it weapons or ammunition that Fletcher had supplied? But it is unfair to criticise these wrigglings of an unfortunate in a false position.

In a despatch of the 23d, which has not been printed, Knappe had told his story: how he had declared war, subjected foreigners to martial law, and been received with a counter-proclamation by the English consul; and how (in an interview with Mataafa chiefs at the plantation-house of Motuotua, of which I cannot find the date) he had demanded the cession of arms and of ringleaders for punishment, and proposed to assume the government of the islands. On February 12th, he received Bismarck's answer: "You had no right to take foreigners from the

Digitized by Google

jurisdiction of their consuls. The protest of your English colleague is grounded. In disputes which may arise from this cause you will find yourself in the wrong. The demand formulated by you, as to the assumption of the government of Samoa by Germany, lay outside of your instructions and of our design. Take it immediately back. If your telegram is here rightly understood, I cannot call your conduct good." It must be a hard heart that does not sympathise with Knappe in the hour when he received this document. Yet it may be said that his troubles were still in the beginning. Men had contended against him, and he had not prevailed; he was now to be at war with the elements, and find his name identified with an immense disaster.

One more date, however, must be given first. It was on February 27th that Fritze formally announced martial law to be suspended, and himself to have relinquished the control of the police.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

THE HURRICANE

March, 1889

THE so-called harbour of Apia is formed in part by a recess of the coast-line at Matautu, in part by the slim peninsula of Mulinuu, and in part by the fresh waters of the Mulivai and Vaisingano. The barrier reef—that singular breakwater that makes so much of the circuit of Pacific islands—is carried far to sea at Matautu and Mulinuu; inside of these two horns it runs sharply landward, and between them it is burst or dissolved by the fresh water. The shape of the inclosed anchorage may be compared to a high-shouldered jar or bottle with a funnel mouth. Its sides are almost everywhere of coral; for the reef not only bounds it to seaward and forms the neck and mouth, but skirting about the beach, it forms the bottom also. As in the bottle of commerce, the bottom is re-entrant, and the shore-reef runs prominently forth into the basin and makes a dangerous cape opposite the fairway of the entrance. Danger is, therefore, on all hands. The entrance gapes three cables

Digitized by Google

wide at the narrowest, and the formidable surf of the Pacific thunders both outside and in. There are days when speech is difficult in the chambers of shoreside houses; days when no boat can land, and when men are broken by stroke of sea against the wharves. As I write these words, three miles in the mountains, and with the land breeze still blowing from the island summit, the sound of that vexed harbour hums in my ears. Such a creek in my native coast of Scotland would scarce be dignified with the mark of an anchor in the chart; but in the favoured climate of Samoa, and with the mechanical regularity of the winds in the Pacific, it forms, for ten or eleven months out of the twelve, a safe if hardly a commodious port. The ill-found island traders ride there with their insufficient moorings the year through, and discharge, and are loaded, without apprehension. Of danger, when it comes, the glass gives timely warning; and that any modern war-ship, furnished with the power of steam, should have been lost in Apia, belongs not so much to nautical as to political history.

The weather throughout all that winter (the turbulent summer of the islands) was unusually fine, and the circumstance had been commented on as providential, when so many Samoans were lying on their weapons in the bush. By February it began to break in occasional gales. On February 10th, a German brigantine was driven

Digitized by Google

ashore. On the 14th, the same misfortune befell an American brigantine and a schooner. On both these days, and again on the 7th March, the men-of-war must steam to their anchors. And it was in this last month, the most dangerous of the twelve, that man's animosities crowded that indentation of the reef with costly, populous, and vulnerable ships.

I have shown, perhaps already at too great a length, how violently passion ran upon the spot; how high this series of blunders and mishaps had heated the resentment of the Germans against all other nationalities and of all other nationalities against the Germans. But there was one country beyond the borders of Samoa where the question had aroused a scarce less angry sentiment. The breach of the Washington Congress, the evidence of Sewall before a sub-committee on foreign relations, the proposal to try Klein before a military court, and the rags of Captain Hamilton's flag, had combined to stir the people of the States to an unwonted fervour. Germany was for the time the abhorred of nations. Germans in America publicly disowned the country of their birth. In Honolulu, so near the scene of action, German and American young men fell to blows in the street. In the same city, from no traceable source and upon no possible authority, there arose a rumour of tragic news to arrive by the next occasion, that the *Nipsic* had opened fire on the *Adler*, and the *Adler* had sunk her on

Digitized by Google

the first reply. Punctually on the day appointed, the news came; and the two nations, instead of being plunged in war, could only mingle tears over the loss of heroes.

By the second week in March, three American ships were in Apia bay,—the *Nipsic*, the *Vandalia*, and the *Trenton*, carrying the flag of Rear-Admiral Kimberley; three German,—the *Adler*, the *Eber*, and the *Olga;* and one British,—the *Calliope*, Captain Kane. Six merchantmen, ranging from twenty-five up to five hundred tons, and a number of small craft, further encumbered the anchorage. Its capacity is estimated by Captain Kane at four large ships; and the latest arrivals, the *Vandalia*, and *Trenton*, were in consequence excluded, and lay without in the passage. Of the seven war-ships, the seaworthiness of two was questionable: the *Trenton's*, from an original defect in her construction, often reported, never remedied—her hawse-pipes leading in on the berth-deck; the *Eber's*, from an injury to her screw in the blow of February 14th. In this over-crowding of ships in an open entry of the reef, even the eye of a landsman could spy danger; and Captain-Lieutenant Wallis of the *Eber* openly blamed and lamented, not many hours before the catastrophe, their helpless posture. Temper once more triumphed. The army of Mataafa still hung imminent behind the town; the German quarter was still daily garrisoned with fifty sailors from the squadron; what was

Digitized by Google

yet more influential, Germany and the States, at least in Apia bay, were on the brink of war, viewed each other with looks of hatred, and scarce observed the letter of civility. On the day of the admiral's arrival, Knappe failed to call on him, and on the morrow called on him while he was on shore. The slight was remarked and resented, and the two squadrons clung the more obstinately to their dangerous station.

On the 15th, the barometer fell to 29°.11 by 2 P.M. This was the moment when every sail in port should have escaped. Kimberley, who flew the only broad pennant, should certainly have led the way: he clung, instead, to his moorings, and the Germans doggedly followed his example: semi-belligerents, daring each other and the violence of heaven. Kane, less immediately involved, was led in error by the report of residents and a fallacious rise in the glass; he stayed with the others, a misjudgment that was like to cost him dear. All were moored, as is the custom in Apia, with two anchors practically east and west, clear hawse to the north, and a kedge astern. Topmasts were struck, and the ships made snug. The night closed black, with sheets of rain. By midnight it blew a gale; and by the morning watch, a tempest. Through what remained of darkness the captains impatiently expected day, doubtful if they were dragging, steaming gingerly to their moorings, and afraid to steam too much.

Digitized by Google

Day came about six, and presented to those on shore a seizing and terrific spectacle. In the pressure of the squalls, the bay was obscured as if by midnight, but between them a great part of it was clearly if darkly visible amid driving mist and rain. The wind blew into the harbour mouth. Naval authorities describe it as of hurricane force. It had, however, few or none of the effects on shore suggested by that ominous word, and was successfully withstood by trees and buildings. The agitation of the sea, on the other hand, surpassed experience and description. Seas that might have awakened surprise and terror in the midst of the Atlantic, ranged bodily and (it seemed to observers) almost without diminution into the belly of that flask-shaped harbour; and the war-ships were alternately buried from view in the trough, or seen standing on end against the breast of billows.

The *Trenton* at daylight still maintained her position in the neck of the bottle. But five of the remaining ships tossed, already close to the bottom, in a perilous and helpless crowd; threatening ruin to each other as they tossed; threatened with a common and imminent destruction on the reefs. Three had been already in collision: the *Olga* was injured in the quarter, the *Adler* had lost her bowsprit; the *Nipsic* had lost her smoke-stack, and was making steam with difficulty, maintaining her fire with barrels of pork, and the smoke and sparks pouring along the

Digitized by Google

level of the deck. For the seventh war-ship, the day had come too late; the *Eber* had finished her last cruise; she was to be seen no more save by the eyes of divers. A coral reef is not only an instrument of destruction, but a place of sepulture; the submarine cliff is profoundly undercut, and presents the mouth of a huge antre, in which the bodies of men and the hulls of ships are alike hurled down and buried. The *Eber* had dragged anchors with the rest; her injured screw disabled her from steaming vigorously up; and a little before day, she had struck the front of the coral, come off, struck again, and gone down stern foremost, oversetting as she went, into the gaping hollow of the reef. Of her whole complement of nearly eighty, four souls were cast alive on the beach; and the bodies of the remainder were by the voluminous outpouring of the flooded streams, scoured at last from the harbour, and strewed naked on the seaboard of the island.

Five ships were immediately menaced with the same destruction. The *Eber* vanished—the four poor survivors on shore read a dreadful commentary on their danger; which was swelled out of all proportion by the violence of their own movements as they leaped and fell among the billows. By seven, the *Nipsic* was so fortunate as to avoid the reef and beach upon a space of sand; where she was immediately deserted by her crew, with the assistance of Samoans, not without loss of life. By about eight, it was the

Digitized by Google

turn of the *Adler*. She was close down upon the reef; doomed herself, it might yet be possible to save a portion of her crew; and for this end, Captain Fritze placed his reliance on the very hugeness of the seas that threatened him. The moment was watched for with the anxiety of despair, but the coolness of disciplined courage. As she rose on the fatal wave, her moorings were simultaneously slipped; she broached to in rising; and the sea heaved her bodily upward and cast her down with a concussion on the summit of the reef, where she lay on her beam ends, her back broken, buried in breaching seas, but safe. Conceive a table: the *Eber* in the darkness had been smashed against the rim and flung below; the *Adler*, cast free in the nick of opportunity, had been thrown upon the top. Many were injured in the concussion; many tossed into the water; twenty perished. The survivors crept again on board their ship, as it now lay, and as it still remains, keel to the waves, a monument of the sea's potency. In still weather, under a cloudless sky, in those seasons when that ill-named ocean, the Pacific, suffers its vexed shores to rest, she lies high and dry, the spray scarce touching her—the hugest structure of man's hands within a circuit of a thousand miles—tossed up there like a schoolboy's cap upon a shelf; broken like an egg: a thing to dream of.

The unfriendly consuls of Germany and Britain were both that morning in Matautu, and

Digitized by Google

both displayed their nobler qualities. De Coetlogon, the grim old soldier, collected his family and kneeled with them in an agony of prayer for those exposed. Knappe, more fortunate in that he was called to a more active service, must, upon the striking of the *Adler*, pass to his own consulate. From this he was divided by the Vaisingano, now a raging torrent, impetuously charioting the trunks of trees. A kelpie might have dreaded to attempt the passage; we may conceive this brave but unfortunate and now ruined man to have found a natural joy in the exposure of his life; and twice that day, coming and going, he braved the fury of the river. It was possible, in spite of the darkness of the hurricane and the continual breaching of the seas, to remark human movements on the *Adler;* and by the help of Samoans, always nobly forward in the work, whether for friend or enemy, Knappe sought long to get a line conveyed from shore, and was for long defeated. The shore guard of fifty men stood to their arms the while upon the beach, useless themselves, and a great deterrent of Samoan usefulness. It was perhaps impossible that this mistake should be avoided. What more natural, to the mind of a European, than that the Mataafas should fall upon the Germans in this hour of their disadvantage? But they had no other thought than to assist; and those who now rallied beside Knappe braved (as they supposed) in doing so a double danger, from the

Digitized by Google

fury of the sea and the weapons of their enemies. About nine, a quartermaster swam ashore, and reported all the officers and some sixty men alive, but in pitiable case; some with broken limbs, others insensible from the drenching of the breakers. Later in the forenoon, certain valorous Samoans succeeded in reaching the wreck and returning with a line; but it was speedily broken; and all subsequent attempts proved unavailing, the strongest adventurers being cast back again by the bursting seas. Thenceforth, all through that day and night, the deafened survivors must continue to endure their martyrdom; and one officer died, it was supposed from agony of mind, in his inverted cabin.

Three ships still hung on the next margin of destruction, steaming desperately to their moorings, dashed helplessly together. The *Calliope* was the nearest in; she had the *Vandalia* close on her port side and a little ahead, the *Olga* close a-starboard, the reef under her heel; and steaming and veering on her cables, the unhappy ship fenced with her three dangers. About a quarter to nine she carried away the *Vandalia's* quarter gallery with her jib-boom; a moment later, the *Olga* had near rammed her from the other side. By nine the *Vandalia* dropped down on her too fast to be avoided, and clapped her stern under the bowsprit of the English ship, the fastenings of which were burst asunder as she rose. To avoid cutting her down, it was necessary for the

Digitized by Google

Calliope to stop and even to reverse her engines; and her rudder was at the moment—or it seemed so to the eyes of those on board—within ten feet of the reef. "Between the *Vandalia* and the reef" (writes Kane, in his excellent report) "it was destruction." To repeat Fritze's manœuvre with the *Adler* was impossible; the *Calliope* was too heavy. The one possibility of escape was to go out. If the engines should stand, if they should have power to drive the ship against wind and sea, if she should answer the helm, if the wheel, rudder, and gear should hold out, and if they were favoured with a clear blink of weather in which to see and avoid the outer reef—there, and there only, were safety. Upon this catalogue of "ifs" Kane staked his all. He signalled to the engineer for every pound of steam—and at that moment (I am told) much of the machinery was already red hot. The ship was sheered well to starboard of the *Vandalia*, the last remaining cable slipped. For a time—and there was no on-looker so cold-blooded as to offer a guess at its duration—the *Calliope* lay stationary; then gradually drew ahead. The highest speed claimed for her that day is of one sea-mile an hour. The question of times and seasons, throughout all this roaring business, is obscured by a dozen contradictions; I have but chosen what appeared to be the most consistent; but if I am to pay any attention to the time named by Admiral Kimberley, the *Calliope*, in this first

Digitized by Google

stage of her escape, must have taken more than two hours to cover less than four cables. As she thus crept seaward, she buried bow and stern alternately under the billows.

In the fairway of the entrance, the flagship *Trenton* still held on. Her rudder was broken, her wheel carried away; within she was flooded with water from the peccant hawse-pipes; she had just made the signal "fires extinguished," and lay helpless, awaiting the inevitable end. Between this melancholy hulk and the external reef, Kane must find a path. Steering within fifty yards of the reef (for which she was actually headed) and her foreyard passing on the other hand over the *Trenton's* quarter as she rolled, the *Calliope* sheered between the rival dangers, came to the wind triumphantly, and was once more pointed for the sea and safety. Not often in naval history was there a moment of more sickening peril, and it was dignified by one of those incidents that reconcile the chronicler with his otherwise abhorrent task. From the doomed flagship, the Americans hailed the success of the English with a cheer. It was led by the old admiral in person, rang out over the storm with holiday vigour, and was answered by the Calliopes with an emotion easily conceived. This ship of their kinsfolk was almost the last external object seen from the *Calliope* for hours; immediately after, the mists closed about her till the morrow. She was safe at sea again—*una de*

Digitized by Google

multis—with a damaged foreyard, and a loss of all the ornamental work about her bow and stern, three anchors, one kedge anchor, fourteen lengths of chain, four boats, the jib-boom, bobstay, and bands and fastenings of the bowsprit.

Shortly after Kane had slipped his cable, Captain Schoonmaker, despairing of the *Vandalia*, succeeded in passing astern of the *Olga*, in the hope to beach his ship beside the *Nipsic*. At a quarter to eleven her stern took the reef, her head swung to starboard, and she began to fill and settle. Many lives of brave men were sacrificed in the attempt to get a line ashore; the captain, exhausted by his exertions, was swept from deck by a sea; and the rail being soon awash, the survivors took refuge in the tops.

Out of thirteen that had lain there the day before, there were now but two ships afloat in Apia harbour, and one of these was doomed to be the bane of the other. About 3 P. M. the *Trenton* parted one cable, and shortly after a second. It was sought to keep her head to wind with storm sails and by the ingenious expedient of filling the rigging with seamen; but in the fury of the gale, and in that sea perturbed alike by the gigantic billows and the volleying discharges of the rivers, the rudderless ship drove down stern foremost into the inner basin; ranging, plunging, and striking like a frightened horse; drifting on destruction for herself and bringing it to others. Twice the *Olga* (still well under command)

Digitized by Google

avoided her impact by the skilful use of helm and engines. But about four the vigilance of the Germans was deceived, and the ships collided; the *Olga* cutting into the *Trenton's* quarters, first from one side, then from the other, and losing at the same time two of her own cables. Captain von Ehrhardt instantly slipped the remainder of his moorings, and setting fore and aft canvas and going full steam ahead, succeeded in beaching his ship in Matautu; whither Knappe, recalled by this new disaster, had returned. The berth was perhaps the best in the harbour, and von Ehrhardt signalled that ship and crew were in security.

The *Trenton*, guided apparently by an undertow or eddy from the discharge of the Vaisingano, followed in the course of the *Nipsic* and *Vandalia*, and skirted southeastward along the front of the shore reef, which her keel was at times almost touching. Hitherto she had brought disaster to her foes; now she was bringing it to friends. She had already proved the ruin of the *Olga*, the one ship that had rid out the hurricane in safety; now she beheld across her course the submerged *Vandalia*, the tops filled with exhausted seamen. Happily the approach of the *Trenton* was gradual, and the time employed to advantage. Rockets and lines were thrown into the tops of the friendly wreck; the approach of danger was transformed into a means of safety; and before the ships struck, the

Digitized by Google

men from the *Vandalia's* main and mizzen masts, which went immediately by the board in the collision, were already mustered on the *Trenton's* decks. Those from the foremast were next rescued; and the flagship settled gradually into a position alongside her neighbour, against which she beat all night with violence. Out of the crew of the *Vandalia* forty-three had perished; of the four hundred and fifty on board the *Trenton*, only one.

The night of the 16th was still notable for a howling tempest and extraordinary floods of rain. It was feared the wrecks could scarce continue to endure the breaching of the seas; among the Germans, the fate of those on board the *Adler* awoke keen anxiety; and Knappe, on the beach of Matautu, and the other officers of his consulate on that of Matafele, watched all night. The morning of the 17th displayed a scene of devastation rarely equalled: the *Adler* high and dry, the *Olga* and *Nipsic* beached, the *Trenton* partly piled on the *Vandalia* and herself sunk to the gun-deck; no sail afloat; and the beach heaped high with the *débris* of ships and the wreck of mountain forests. Already, before the day, Seumanu, the chief of Apia, had gallantly ventured forth by boat through the subsiding fury of the seas, and had succeeded in communicating with the admiral; already, or as soon after as the dawn permitted, rescue lines were rigged, and the survivors were with difficulty and danger begun to

Digitized by Google

be brought to shore. And soon the cheerful spirit of the admiral added a new feature to the scene. Surrounded as he was by the crews of two wrecked ships, he paraded the band of the *Trenton*, and the bay was suddenly enlivened with the strains of "Hail Columbia."

During a great part of the day, the work of rescue was continued, with many instances of courage and devotion; and for a long time succeeding, the almost inexhaustible harvest of the beach was to be reaped. In the first employment, the Samoans earned the gratitude of friend and foe; in the second, they surprised all by an unexpected virtue, that of honesty. The greatness of the disaster, and the magnitude of the treasure now rolling at their feet, may perhaps have roused in their bosoms an emotion too serious for the rule of greed, or perhaps that greed was for the moment satiated. Sails that twelve strong Samoans could scarce drag from the water, great guns (one of which was rolled by the sea on the body of a man, the only native slain in all the hurricane), an infinite wealth of rope and wood, of tools and weapons, tossed upon the beach. Yet I have never heard that much was stolen; and beyond question, much was very honestly returned. On both accounts, for the saving of life and the restoration of property, the government of the United States showed themselves generous in reward. A fine boat was fitly presented to Seumanu; and rings, watches,

Digitized by Google

and money were lavished on all who had assisted. The Germans also gave money at the rate (as I receive the tale) of three dollars a head for every German saved. The obligation was in this instance incommensurably deep, those with whom they were at war had saved the German blue-jackets at the venture of their lives; Knappe was, besides, far from ungenerous; and I can only explain the niggard figure, by supposing it was paid from his own pocket. In one case, at least, it was refused. "I have saved three Germans," said the rescuer; "I will make you a present of the three."

The crews of the American and German squadrons were now cast, still in a bellicose temper, together on the beach. The discipline of the Americans was notoriously loose; the crew of the *Nipsic* had earned a character for lawlessness in other ports; and recourse was had to stringent and indeed extraordinary measures. The town was divided in two camps, to which the different nationalities were confined. Kimberley had his quarter sentinelled and patrolled. Any seaman disregarding a challenge was to be shot dead; any tavern-keeper who sold spirits to an American sailor was to have his tavern broken and his stock destroyed. Many of the publicans were German; and Knappe, having narrated these rigorous but necessary dispositions, wonders (grinning to himself over his despatch) how far these Americans will go in their assumption

Digitized by Google

of jurisdiction over Germans? Such as they were, the measures were successful. The incongruous mass of castaways was kept in peace, and at last shipped in peace out of the islands.

Kane returned to Apia on the 19th, to find the *Calliope* the sole survivor of thirteen sail. He thanked his men, and in particular the engineers, in a speech of unusual feeling and beauty, of which one who was present remarked to another, as they left the ship, "This has been a means of grace." Nor did he forget to thank and compliment the admiral; and I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing from Kimberley's reply some generous and engaging words. "My dear captain," he wrote, "your kind note received. You went out splendidly, and we all felt from our hearts for you, and our cheers came with sincerity and admiration for the able manner in which you handled your ship. We could not have been gladder if it had been one of our ships, for in a time like that I can say truly with old Admiral Josiah Tatnall, 'that blood *is* thicker than water.'" One more trait will serve to build up the image of this typical sea-officer. A tiny schooner, the *Equator*, Captain Edwin Reid, dear to myself from the memories of a six months' cruise, lived out upon the high seas the fury of that tempest which had piled with wrecks the harbour of Apia, found a refuge in Pango-pango, and arrived at last in the desolated port with a welcome and lucrative cargo of pigs.

Digitized by Google

The admiral was glad to have the pigs; but what most delighted the man's noble and childish soul was to see once more afloat the colours of his country.

Thus, in what seemed the very article of war, and within the duration of a single day, the sword-arm of each of the two angry powers was broken; their formidable ships reduced to junk; their disciplined hundreds to a horde of castaways, fed with difficulty, and the fear of whose misconduct marred the sleep of their commanders. Both paused aghast; both had time to recognise that not the whole Samoan Archipelago was worth the loss in men and costly ships already suffered. The so-called hurricane of March 16th made thus a marking epoch in world-history; directly, and at once, it brought about the congress and treaty of Berlin; indirectly, and by a process still continuing, it founded the modern navy of the States. Coming years and other historians will declare the influence of that.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

LAUPEPA AND MATAAFA

1889 to 1892

WITH the hurricane, the broken war-ships, and the stranded sailors, I am at an end of violence, and my tale flows henceforth among carpet incidents. The blue-jackets on Apia beach were still jealously held apart by sentries, when the powers at home were already seeking a peaceable solution. It was agreed, so far as might be, to obliterate two years of blundering and to resume in 1889 and at Berlin those negotiations which had been so unhappily broken off at Washington in 1887. The example thus offered by Germany is rare in history; in the career of Prince Bismarck, so far as I am instructed, it should stand unique. On a review of these two years of blundering, bullying, and failure in a little isle of the Pacific, he seems magnanimously to have owned his policy was in the wrong. He left Fangalii unexpiated; suffered that house of cards, the Tamasese government, to fall by its own frailty and without remark or lamentation; left the Samoan question openly and fairly to

Digitized by Google

the conference: and in the meanwhile to allay the local heats engendered by Becker and Knappe, he sent to Apia that invaluable public servant, Dr. Stuebel. I should be a dishonest man if I did not here bear testimony to the loyalty since shown by Germans in Samoa. Their position was painful; they had talked big in the old days, now they had to sing small. Even Stuebel returned to the islands under the prejudice of an unfortunate record. To the minds of the Samoans his name represented the beginning of their sorrows; and in his first term of office he had unquestionably driven hard. The greater his merit in the surprising success of the second. So long as he stayed, the current of affairs moved smoothly; he left behind him on his departure all men at peace; and whether by fortune, or for the want of that wise hand of guidance, he was scarce gone before the clouds began to gather once more on our horizon.

Before the first convention, Germany and the States hauled down their flags. It was so done again before the second; and Germany, by a still more emphatic step of retrogression, returned the exile Laupepa to his native shores. For two years the unfortunate man had trembled and suffered in the Cameroons, in Germany, in the rainy Marshalls. When he left (September, 1887), Tamasese was king, served by five iron war-ships; his right to rule (like a dogma of the church) was placed outside dispute; the Germans

Digitized by Google

were still, as they were called at that last tearful interview in the house by the river, "the invincible strangers"; the thought of resistance, far less the hope of success, had not yet dawned on the Samoan mind. He returned (November, 1889) to a changed world. The Tupua party was reduced to sue for peace, Brandeis was withdrawn, Tamasese was dying obscurely of a broken heart; the German flag no longer waved over the capital; and over all the islands one figure stood supreme. During Laupepa's absence this man had succeeded him in all his honours and titles, in tenfold more than all his power and popularity. He was the idol of the whole nation but the rump of the Tamaseses, and of these he was already the secret admiration. In his position there was but one weak point—that he had ever been tacitly excluded by the Germans. Becker, indeed, once coquetted with the thought of patronising him; but the project had no sequel, and it stands alone. In every other juncture of history the German attitude has been the same. Choose whom you will to be king; when he has failed, choose whom you please to succeed him; when the second fails also, replace the first: upon the one condition, that Mataafa be excluded. "*Pourvu qu'il sache signer!*"—an official is said to have thus summed up the qualifications necessary in a Samoan king. And it was perhaps feared that Mataafa could do no more and might not always do so much. But this original diffi-

Digitized by Google

dence was heightened by late events to something verging upon animosity. Fangalii was unavenged; the arms of Mataafa were

> "*Nondum inexpiatis uncta cruoribus,*
> Still soiled with the unexpiated blood,"

of German sailors; and though the chief was not present in the field, nor could have heard of the affair till it was over, he had reaped from it credit with his countrymen and dislike from the Germans.

I may not say that trouble was hoped. I must say—if it were not feared, the practice of diplomacy must teach a very hopeful view of human nature. Mataafa and Laupepa, by the sudden repatriation of the last, found themselves face to face in conditions of exasperating rivalry. The one returned from the dead of exile to find himself replaced and excelled. The other, at the end of a long, anxious, and successful struggle, beheld his only possible competitor resuscitated from the grave. The qualities of both, in this difficult moment, shone out nobly. I feel I seem always less than partial to the lovable Laupepa; his virtues are perhaps not those which chiefly please me, and are certainly not royal; but he found on his return an opportunity to display the admirable sweetness of his nature. The two entered into a competition of generosity, for which I can recall no parallel in history, each waiving the throne for himself, each pressing it

Digitized by Google

upon his rival; and they embraced at last a compromise the terms of which seem to have been always obscure and are now disputed. Laupepa at least resumed his style of King of Samoa; Mataafa retained much of the conduct of affairs, and continued to receive much of the attendance and respect befitting royalty; and the two Malitoas, with so many causes of disunion, dwelt and met together in the same town like kinsmen. It was so, that I first saw them; so, in a house set about with sentries—for there was still a haunting fear of Germany—that I heard them relate their various experience in the past; heard Laupepa tell with touching candour of the sorrows of his exile, and Mataafa with mirthful simplicity of his resources and anxieties in the war. The relation was perhaps too beautiful to last; it was perhaps impossible but the titular king should grow at last uneasily conscious of the *maire de palais* at his side, or the kingmaker be at last offended by some shadow of distrust or assumption in his creature. I repeat the words king-maker and creature; it is so that Mataafa himself conceives of their relation: surely not without justice; for, had he not contended and prevailed, and been helped by the folly of consuls and the fury of the storm, Laupepa must have died in exile.

Foreigners in these islands know little of the course of native intrigue. Partly the Samoans cannot explain, partly they will not tell. Ask

Digitized by Google

how much a master can follow of the puerile politics in any school; so much and no more we may understand of the events which surround and menace us with their results. The missions may perhaps have been to blame. Missionaries are perhaps apt to meddle overmuch outside their discipline; it is a fault which should be judged with mercy; the problem is sometimes so insidiously presented that even a moderate and able man is betrayed beyond his own intention; and the missionary in such a land as Samoa is something else besides a minister of mere religion; he represents civilisation, he is condemned to be an organ of reform, he could scarce evade (even if he desired) a certain influence in political affairs. And it is believed, besides, by those who fancy they know, that the effective force of division between Mataafa and Laupepa came from the natives rather than from whites. Before the end of 1890, at least, it began to be rumoured that there was dispeace between the two Malietoas; and doubtless this had an unsettling influence throughout the islands. But there was another ingredient of anxiety. The Berlin convention had long closed its sittings; the text of the act had been long in our hands; commissioners were announced to right the wrongs of the land question, and two high officials, a chief justice and a president, to guide policy and administer law in Samoa. Their coming was expected with an impatience, with a

Digitized by Google

childishness of trust, that can hardly be exaggerated. Months passed, these angel-deliverers still delayed to arrive, and the impatience of the natives became changed to an ominous irritation. They have had much experience of being deceived, and they began to think they were deceived again. A sudden crop of superstitious stories buzzed about the islands. Rivers had come down red; unknown fishes had been taken on the reef and found to be marked with menacing runes; a headless lizard crawled among chiefs in council; the gods of Upolu and Savaii made war by night, they swam the straits to battle, and, defaced with dreadful wounds, they had besieged the house of a medical missionary. Readers will remember the portents in mediæval chronicles, or those in *Julius Cæsar* when

> "Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds
> In ranks and squadrons."

And doubtless such fabrications are, in simple societies, a natural expression of discontent; and those who forge, and even those who spread them, work towards a conscious purpose.

Early in January, 1891, this period of expectancy was brought to an end by the arrival of Conrad Cederkrantz, chief justice of Samoa. The event was hailed with acclamation, and there was much about the new official to increase the hopes already entertained. He was seen to be a man of culture and ability; in public, of an

Digitized by Google

excellent presence—in private, of a most engaging cordiality. But there was one point, I scarce know whether to say of his character or policy, which immediately and disastrously affected public feeling in the islands. He had an aversion, part judicial, part perhaps constitutional, to haste; and he announced that, until he should have well satisfied his own mind, he should do nothing; that he would rather delay all than do aught amiss. It was impossible to hear this without academical approval; impossible to hear it without practical alarm. The natives desired to see activity; they desired to see many fair speeches take on a body of deeds and works of benefit. Fired by the event of the war, filled with impossible hopes, they might have welcomed in that hour a ruler of the stamp of Brandeis, breathing hurry, perhaps dealing blows. And the chief justice, unconscious of the fleeting opportunity, ripened his opinions deliberately in Mulinuu; and had been already the better part of half a year in the islands before he went through the form of opening his court. The curtain had risen; there was no play. A reaction, a chill sense of disappointment, passed about the island; and intrigue, one moment suspended, was resumed.

In the Berlin act, the three powers recognise, on the threshold, "the independence of the Samoan Government, and the free right of the natives to elect their chief or king and choose their

Digitized by Google

form of government." True, the text continues that, "in view of the difficulties that surround an election in the present disordered condition of the government," Malietoa Laupepa shall be recognised as king, "unless the three powers shall by common accord otherwise declare." But perhaps few natives have followed it so far, and even those who have, were possibly cast all abroad again by the next clause: "and his successor shall be duly elected according to the laws and customs of Samoa." The right to elect, freely given in one sentence, was suspended in the next, and a line or so further on appeared to be reconveyed by a side-wind. The reason offered for suspension was ludicrously false; in May, 1889, when Sir Edward Malet moved the matter in the conference, the election of Mataafa was not only certain to have been peaceful, it could not have been opposed; and behind the English puppet it was easy to suspect the hand of Germany. No one is more swift to smell trickery than a Samoan; and the thought that, under the long, bland, benevolent sentences of the Berlin act, some trickery lay lurking, filled him with the breath of opposition. Laupepa seems never to have been a popular king. Mataafa, on the other hand, holds an unrivalled position in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen; he was the hero of the war, he had lain with them in the bush, he had borne the heat and burthen of the day; they began to claim that he should enjoy more largely

Digitized by Google

the fruits of victory; his exclusion was believed to be a stroke of German vengeance, his elevation to the kingship was looked for as the fitting crown and copestone of the Samoan triumph; and but a little after the coming of the chief justice, an ominous cry for Mataafa began to arise in the islands. It is difficult to see what that official could have done but what he did. He was loyal, as in duty bound, to the treaty and to Laupepa; and when the orators of the important and unruly islet of Manono demanded to his face a change of kings, he had no choice but to refuse them, and (his reproof being unheeded) to suspend the meeting. Whether by any neglect of his own or the mere force of circumstance, he failed, however, to secure the sympathy, failed even to gain the confidence, of Mataafa. The latter is not without a sense of his own abilities or of the great service he has rendered to his native land. He felt himself neglected; at the very moment when the cry for his elevation rang throughout the group, he thought himself made little of on Mulinuu; and he began to weary of his part. In this humour, he was exposed to a temptation which I must try to explain as best I may be able to Europeans.

The bestowal of the great name, Malietoa, is in the power of the district of Malie, some seven miles to the westward of Apia. The most noisy and conspicuous supporters of that party are the inhabitants of Manono. Hence in the elaborate,

Digitized by Google

allusive oratory of Samoa, Malie is always referred to by the name of *Pule* (authority) as having the power of the name, and Manono by that of *Ainga* (clan, sept, or household) as forming the immediate family of the chief. But these, though so important, are only small communities; and perhaps the chief numerical force of the Malietoas inhabits the island of Savaii. Savaii has no royal name to bestow, all the five being in the gift of different districts of Upolu; but she has the weight of numbers, and in these latter days has acquired a certain force by the preponderance in her councils of a single man, the orator Lauati. The reader will now understand the peculiar significance of a deputation which should embrace Lauati and the orators of both Malie and Manono, how it would represent all that is most effective on the Malietoa side, and all that is most considerable in Samoan politics, except the opposite feudal party of the Tupua. And in the temptation brought to bear on Mataafa, even the Tupua was conjoined. Tamasese was dead. His followers had conceived a not unnatural aversion to all Germans, from which only the loyal Brandeis is excepted; and a not unnatural admiration for their late successful adversary. Men of his own blood and clan, men whom he had fought in the field whom he had driven from Matautu, who had smitten him back time and again from before the rustic bulwarks of Lotoanuu, they approached him

Digitized by Google

hand in hand with their ancestral enemies and concurred in the same prayer. The treaty (they argued) was not carried out. The right to elect their king had been granted them; or if that were denied or suspended, then the right to elect "his successor." They were dissatisfied with Laupepa, and claimed, "according to the laws and customs of Samoa," duly to appoint another. The orators of Malie declared with irritation that their second appointment was alone valid and Mataafa the sole Malietoa; the whole body of malcontents named him as their choice for king; and they requested him in consequence to leave Apia and take up his dwelling in Malie, the name-place of Malietoa; a step which may be described, to European ears, as placing before the country his candidacy for the crown.

I do not know when the proposal was first made. Doubtless the disaffection grew slowly, every trifle adding to its force; doubtless there lingered for long a willingness to give the new government a trial. The chief justice at least had been nearly five months in the country, and the president Baron Senfft von Pilsach, rather more than a month, before the mine was sprung. On May 31, 1891, the house of Mataafa was found empty, he and his chiefs had vanished from Apia, and what was worse, three prisoners, liberated from the gaol, had accompanied them in their secession; two being political offenders, and the third (accused of murder) having been

Digitized by Google

perhaps set free by accident. Although the step had been discussed in certain quarters, it took all men by surprise. The inhabitants at large expected instant war. The officials awakened from a dream to recognise the value of that which they had lost. Mataafa at Vaiala, where he was the pledge of peace, had perhaps not always been deemed worthy of particular attention; Mataafa at Malie was seen, twelve hours too late, to be an altogether different quantity. With excess of zeal on the other side, the officials trooped to their boats and proceeded almost in a body to Malie, where they seem to have employed every artifice of flattery and every resource of eloquence upon the fugitive high chief. These courtesies, perhaps excessive in themselves, had the unpardonable fault of being offered when too late. Mataafa showed himself facile on small issues, inflexible on the main; he restored the prisoners, he returned with the consuls to Apia on a flying visit; he gave his word that peace should be preserved—a pledge in which perhaps no one believed at the moment, but which he has since nobly redeemed. On the rest, he was immovable; he had cast the die, he had declared his candidacy, he had gone to Malie. Thither, after his visit to Apia, he returned again; there he has practically since resided.

Thus was created in the islands a situation, strange in the beginning, and which, as its inner significance is developed, becomes daily stranger

Digitized by Google

to observe. On the one hand, Mataafa sits in Malie, assumes a regal state, receives deputations, heads his letters "Government of Samoa," tacitly treats the king as a co-ordinate; and yet declares himself, and in many ways conducts himself, as a law-abiding citizen. On the other, the white officials in Mulinuu stand contemplating the phenomenon with eyes of growing stupefaction; now with symptoms of collapse, now with accesses of violence. For long, even those well versed in island manners and the island character daily expected war, and heard imaginary drums beat in the forest. But for now close upon a year, and against every stress of persuasion and temptation, Mataafa has been the bulwark of our peace. Apia lay open to be seized, he had the power in his hand, his followers cried to be led on, his enemies marshalled him the same way by impotent examples; and he has never faltered. Early in the day, a white man was sent from the government of Mulinuu to examine and report upon his actions; I saw the spy on his return: "It was only our rebel that saved us," he said with a laugh. There is now no honest man in the islands but is well aware of it; none but knows that, if we had enjoyed during the past eleven months the conveniences of peace, it is due to the forbearance of "our rebel." Nor does this part of his conduct stand alone. He calls his party at Malie the government—"our government"—but he pays his

Digitized by Google

taxes to the government at Mulinuu. He takes ground like a king; he has steadily and blandly refused to obey all orders as to his own movements or behaviour; but upon requisition, he sends offenders to be tried under the chief justice.

We have here a problem of conduct, and what seems an image of inconsistency, very hard at the first sight to be solved by any European. Plainly Mataafa does not act at random. Plainly, in the depths of his Samoan mind, he regards his attitude as regular and constitutional. It may be unexpected, it may be inauspicious, it may be undesirable; but he thinks it—and perhaps it is—in full accordance with those "laws and customs of Samoa" ignorantly invoked by the draughtsmen of the Berlin act. The point is worth an effort of comprehension; a man's life may yet depend upon it. Let us conceive, in the first place, that there are five separate kingships in Samoa, though not always five different kings; and that though one man, by holding the five royal names, might become king *in all parts* of Samoa, there is perhaps no such matter as a kingship of all Samoa. He who holds one royal name would be, upon this view, as much a sovereign person as he who should chance to hold the other four; he would have less territory and fewer subjects, but the like independence and an equal royalty. Now Mataafa, even if all debatable points were decided against him, is still Tuiatua, and as such, on this hypothesis, a sovereign

Digitized by Google

prince. In the second place, the draughtsmen of the act, waxing exceeding bold, employed the word "election," and implicitly justified all precedented steps towards the kingship according with the "customs of Samoa." I am not asking what was intended by the gentlemen who sat and debated very benignly and, on the whole, wisely in Berlin; I am asking what will be understood by a Samoan studying their literary work, the Berlin act; I am asking what is the result of taking a word out of one state of society, and applying it to another, of which the writers know less than nothing, and no European knows much. Several interpreters and several days were employed last September in the fruitless attempt to convey to the mind of Laupepa the sense of the word "resignation." What can a Samoan gather from the words, *election? election of a king? election of a king according to the laws and customs of Samoa?* What are the electoral measures, what is the method of canvassing, likely to be employed by two, three, four, or five, more or less absolute princelings, eager to evince each other? And who is to distinguish such a process from the state of war? In such international—or, I should say, interparochial—differences, the nearest we can come towards understanding is to appreciate the cloud of ambiguity in which all parties grope.

> "Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
> Half flying."

Digitized by Google

Now in one part of Mataafa's behaviour his purpose is beyond mistake. Towards the provisions of the Berlin act, his desire to be formally obedient is manifest. The Act imposed the tax. He has paid his taxes, although he thus contributes to the ways and means of his immediate rival. The Act decreed the supreme court, and he sends his partisans to be tried at Mulinuu, although he thus places them (as I shall have occasion to show) in a position far from wholly safe. From this literal conformity, in matters regulated, to the terms of the Berlin plenipotentiaries, we may plausibly infer, in regard to the rest, a no less exact observance of the famous and obscure "laws and customs of Samoa."

But though it may be possible to obtain, in the study, to some such adumbration of an understanding, it were plainly unfair to expect it of officials in the hurry of events. Our two white officers have accordingly been no more perspicacious than was to be looked for, and I think they have sometimes been less wise. It was not wise in the president to proclaim Mataafa and his followers rebels and their estates confiscated. Such words are not respectable till they repose on force; on the lips of an angry white man, standing alone on a small promontory, they were both dangerous and absurd; they might have provoked ruin; thanks to the character of Mataafa, they only raised a smile and damaged the authority of government. And again

Digitized by Google

it is not wise in the government of Mulinuu to have twice attempted to precipitate hostilities, once in Savaii, once here in the Tuamasanga. The fate of the Savaii attempt I never heard; it seems to have been still-born. The other passed under my eyes. A war-party was armed in Apia, and despatched across the island against Mataafa villages, where it was to seize the women and children. It was absent for some days, engaged in feasting with those whom it went out to fight; and returned at last, innocuous and replete. In this fortunate though undignified ending we may read the fact that the natives on Laupepa's side are sometimes more wise than their advisers. Indeed, for our last twelve months of miraculous peace under what seem to be two rival kings, the credit is due first of all to Mataafa, and second to the half-heartedness, or the forbearance, or both, of the natives in the other camp. The voice of the two whites has ever been for war. They have published at least one incendiary proclamation; they have armed and sent into the field at least one Samoan war-party; they have continually besieged captains of war-ships to attack Malie, and the captains of the war-ships have religiously refused. Thus in the last twelve months, our European rulers have drawn a picture of themselves, as bearded like the pard, full of strange oaths, and gesticulating like semaphores; while over against them Mataafa reposes smilingly obstinate, and their own re-

Digitized by Google

tainers surround them, frowningly inert. Into the question of motive I refuse to enter; but if we come to war in these islands, and with no fresh occasion, it will be a manufactured war, and one that has been manufactured, against the grain of opinion, by two foreigners.

For the last and worst of the mistakes on the Laupepa side, it would be unfair to blame any but the king himself. Capable both of virtuous resolutions and of fits of apathetic obstinacy, His Majesty is usually the whip-top of competitive advisers; and his conduct is so unstable as to wear at times an appearance of treachery which would surprise himself if he could see it. Take, for example, the experience of Lieutenant Ulfsparre, late chief of police, and (so to speak) commander of the forces. His men were under orders for a certain hour; he found himself almost alone at the place of muster, and learned the king had sent the soldiery on errands. He sought an audience, explained that he was here to implant discipline, that (with this purpose in view) his men could only receive orders through himself, and if that condition were not agreed to and faithfully observed, he must send in his papers. The king was as usual easily persuaded, the interview passed and ended to the satisfaction of all parties engaged—and the bargain was kept for one day. On the day after, the troops were again dispersed as post-runners, and their commander resigned. With such a sovereign, I re-

Digitized by Google

peat, it would be unfair to blame any individual minister for any specific fault. And yet the policy of our two whites against Mataafa has appeared uniformly so excessive and implacable, that the blame of the last scandal is laid generally at their doors. It is yet fresh. Lauati, towards the end of last year, became deeply concerned about the situation; and by great personal exertions and the charms of oratory brought Savaii and Manono into agreement upon certain terms of compromise: Laupepa still to be king, Mataafa to accept a high executive office comparable to that of our own prime minister, and the two governments to coalesce. Intractable Manono was a party. Malie was said to view the proposal with resignation, if not relief. Peace was thought secure. The night before the king was to receive Lauati, I met one of his company, —the family chief, Iina,—and we shook hands over the unexpected issue of our troubles. What no one dreamed was that Laupepa would refuse. And he did. He refused undisputed royalty for himself and peace for these unhappy islands; and the two whites on Mulinuu rightly or wrongly got the blame of it.

But their policy has another and a more awkward side. About the time of the secession to Malie, many ugly things were said; I will not repeat that which I hope and believe the speakers did not wholly mean; let it suffice that, if rumour carried to Mataafa the language I have heard

Digitized by Google

used in my own house and before my own native servants, he would be highly justified in keeping clear of Apia and the whites. One gentleman whose opinion I respect, and am so bold as to hope I may in some points modify, will understand the allusion and appreciate my reserve. About the same time there occurred an incident, upon which I must be more particular. *A* was a gentleman who had long been an intimate of Mataafa's, and had recently (upon account, indeed, of the secession to Malie) more or less wholly broken off relations. To him came one whom I shall call *B* with a dastardly proposition. It may have been *B's* own, in which case he were the more unpardonable; but from the closeness of his intercourse with the chief justice, as well as from the terms used in the interview, men judged otherwise. It was proposed that *A* should simulate a renewal of the friendship, decoy Mataafa to a suitable place, and have him there arrested. What should follow in those days of violent speech was at the least disputable; and the proposal was of course refused. "You do not understand," was the base rejoinder. "*You* will have no discredit. The Germans are to take the blame of the arrest." Of course, upon the testimony of a gentleman so depraved, it were unfair to hang a dog; and both the Germans and the chief justice must be held innocent. But the chief justice has shown that he can himself be led, by his animosity against Mataafa, into ques-

Digitized by Google

tionable acts. Certain natives of Malie were accused of stealing pigs; the chief justice summoned them through Mataafa; several were sent, and along with them a written promise that, if others were required, these also should be forthcoming upon requisition. Such as came were duly tried and acquitted; and Mataafa's offer was communicated to the chief justice, who made a formal answer, and the same day (in pursuance of his constant design to have Malie attacked by war-ships) reported to one of the consuls that his warrant would not run in the country and that certain of the accused had been withheld. At least, this is not fair dealing; and the next instance I have to give is possibly worse. For one blunder the chief justice is only so far responsible, in that he was not present where it seems he should have been, when it was made. He had nothing to do with the silly proscription of the Mataafas; he has always disliked the measure; and it occurred to him at last that he might get rid of this dangerous absurdity and at the same time reap a further advantage. Let Mataafa leave Malie for any other district in Samoa; it should be construed as an act of submission and the confiscation and proscription instantly recalled. This was certainly well devised; the government escaped from their own false position, and by the same stroke lowered the prestige of their adversaries. But unhappily the chief justice did not put all his eggs in one basket. Con-

Digitized by Google

currently with these negotiations he began again to move the captain of one of the war-ships to shell the rebel village; the captain, conceiving the extremity wholly unjustified, not only refused these instances, but more or less publicly complained of their being made; the matter came to the knowledge of the white resident who was at that time playing the part of intermediary with Malie; and he, in natural anger and disgust, withdrew from the negotiation. These duplicities, always deplorable when discovered, are never more fatal than with men imperfectly civilised. Almost incapable of truth themselves, they cherish a particular scorn of the same fault in whites. And Mataafa is besides an exceptional native. I would scarce dare say of any Samoan that he is truthful, though I seem to have encountered the phenomenon; but I must say of Mataafa that he seems distinctly and consistently averse to lying.

For the affair of the Manono prisoners, the chief justice is only again in so far answerable as he was at the moment absent from the seat of his duties; and the blame falls on Baron Senfft von Pilsach, President of the Municipal Council. There were in Manono certain dissidents, loyal to Laupepa. Being Manono people, I daresay they were very annoying to their neighbours; the majority, as they belonged to the same island, were the more impatient; and one fine day fell upon and destroyed the houses and harvest of the

Digitized by Google

dissidents "according to the laws and customs of Samoa." The president went down to the unruly island in a war-ship and was landed alone upon the beach. To one so much a stranger to the mansuetude of Polynesians, this must have seemed an act of desperation; and the baron's gallantry met with a deserved success. The six ringleaders, acting in Mataafa's interest, had been guilty of a delict; with Mataafa's approval, they delivered themselves over to be tried. On Friday, September 4, 1891, they were convicted before a native magistrate and sentenced to six months' imprisonment; or, I should rather say, detention; for it was expressly directed that they were to be used as gentlemen and not as prisoners, that the door was to stand open, and that all their wishes should be gratified. This extraordinary sentence fell upon the accused like a thunderbolt. There is no need to suppose perfidy, where a careless interpreter suffices to explain all; but the six chiefs claim to have understood their coming to Apia as an act of submission merely formal, that they came in fact under an implied indemnity, and that the president stood pledged to see them scatheless. Already on their way from the courthouse, they were tumultuously surrounded by friends and clansmen, who pressed and cried upon them to escape; Lieutenant Ulfsparre must order his men to load; and with that the momentary effervescence died away. Next day, Saturday, 5th, the chief jus-

Digitized by Google

tice took his departure from the islands—a step never yet explained and (in view of the doings of the day before and the remonstrances of other officials) hard to justify. The president, an amiable and brave young man of singular inexperience, was thus left to face the growing difficulty by himself. The clansmen of the prisoners, to the number of near upon a hundred, lay in Vaiusu, a village half way between Apia and Malie; there they talked big, thence sent menacing messages; the gaol should be broken in the night, they said, and the six martyrs rescued. Allowance is to be made for the character of the people of Manono, turbulent fellows, boastful of tongue, but of late days not thought to be answerably bold in person. Yet the moment was anxious. The government of Mulinuu had gained an important moral victory by the surrender and condemnation of the chiefs; and it was needful the victory should be maintained. The guard upon the gaol was accordingly strengthened; a war-party was sent to watch the Vaiusu road under Asi; and the chiefs of the Vaimaunga were notified to arm and assemble their men. It must be supposed the president was doubtful of the loyalty of these assistants. He turned at least to the war-ships, where it seems he was rebuffed; thence he fled into the arms of the wrecker gang, where he was unhappily more successful. The government of Washington had presented to the Samoan king the wrecks of the *Trenton* and the

Digitized by Google

Vandalia; an American syndicate had been formed to break them up; an experienced gang was in consequence settled in Apia; and the report of submarine explosions had long grown familiar in the ears of residents. From these artificers the president obtained a supply of dynamite, the needful mechanism, and the loan of a mechanic; the gaol was mined, and the Manono people in Vaiusu were advertised of the fact in a letter signed by Laupepa. Partly by the indiscretion of the mechanic, who had sought to embolden himself (like Lady Macbeth) with liquor for his somewhat dreadful task, the story leaked immediately out and raised a very general, or I might say almost universal, reprobation. Some blamed the proposed deed because it was barbarous and a foul example to set before a race half barbarous itself; others because it was illegal; others again because, in the face of so weak an enemy, it appeared pitifully pusillanimous; almost all because it tended to precipitate and embitter war. In the midst of the turmoil he had raised, and under the immediate pressure of certain indignant white residents, the baron fell back upon a new expedient, certainly less barbarous, perhaps no more legal; and on Monday afternoon, September 7th, packed his six prisoners on board the cutter *Lancashire Lass*, and deported them to the neighbouring low-island group of the Tokelaus. We watched her put to sea with mingled feelings. Anything were

Digitized by Google

better than dynamite, but this was not good. The men had been summoned in the name of law; they had surrendered; the law had uttered its voice; they were under one sentence duly delivered; and now the president, by no right with which we were acquainted, had exchanged it for another. It was perhaps no less fortunate, though it was more pardonable in a stranger, that he had increased the punishment to that which, in the eyes of Samoans, ranks next to death,—exile from their native land and friends. And the *Lancashire Lass* appeared to carry away with her into the uttermost parts of the sea the honour of the administration and the prestige of the supreme court.

The policy of the government towards Mataafa has thus been of a piece throughout; always would-be violent, it has been almost always defaced with some appearance of perfidy or unfairness. The policy of Mataafa (though extremely bewildering to any white) appears everywhere consistent with itself, and the man's bearing has always been calm. But to represent the fulness of the contrast, it is necessary that I should give some description of the two capitals, or the two camps, and the ways and means of the regular and irregular government.

Mulinuu. Mulinuu, the reader may remember, is a narrow finger of land planted in cocopalms, which runs forth into the lagoon perhaps three quarters of a mile. To the east is the bay

Digitized by Google

of Apia. To the west, there is, first of all, a mangrove swamp, the mangroves excellently green, the mud ink-black, and its face crawled upon by countless insects and black and scarlet crabs. Beyond the swamp is a wide and shallow bay of the lagoon, bounded to the west by Faleula Point. Faleula is the next village to Malie; so that from the top of some tall palm in Malie, it should be possible to descry against the eastern heavens the palms of Mulinuu. The trade wind sweeps over the low peninsula and cleanses it from the contagion of the swamp. Samoans have a quaint phrase in their language; when out of health, they seek exposed places on the shore "to eat the wind," say they; and there can be few better places for such a diet than the point of Mulinuu.

Two European houses stand conspicuous on the harbour side; in Europe they would seem poor enough, but they are fine houses for Samoa. One is new; it was built the other day under the apologetic title of a Government House, to be the residence of Baron Senfft. The other is historical; it was built by Brandeis on a mortgage, and is now occupied by the chief justice on conditions never understood, the rumour going uncontradicted that he sits rent free. I do not say it is true, I say it goes uncontradicted; and there is one peculiarity of our officials in a nutshell—their remarkable indifference to their own character. From the one house to the other extends

Digitized by Google

a scattering village for the Faipule or native parliament men. In the days of Tamasese this was a brave place, both his own house and those of the Faipule good, and the whole excellently ordered and approached by a sanded way. It is now like a neglected bush town, and speaks of apathy in all concerned. But the chief scandal of Mulinuu is elsewhere. The house of the president stands just to seaward of the isthmus, where the watch is set nightly, and armed men guard the uneasy slumbers of the government. On the landward side there stands a monument to the poor German lads who fell at Fangalii, just beyond which the passer-by may chance to observe a little house standing backward from the road. It is such a house as a commoner might use in a bush village; none could dream that it gave shelter even to a family chief; yet this is the palace of Malietoa-Natoaitele-Tamasoalii Laupepa, king of Samoa. As you sit in his company under this humble shelter, you shall see, between the posts, the new house of the president. His Majesty himself beholds it daily, and the tenor of his thoughts may be divined. The fine house of a Samoan chief is his appropriate attribute; yet, after seventeen months, the government (well housed themselves) have not yet found—have not yet sought—a roof-tree for their sovereign. And the lodging is typical. I take up the president's financial statement of September 8, 1891. I find the king's allowance to figure at seventy-

Digitized by Google

five dollars a month; and I find that he is further (though somewhat obscurely) debited with the salaries of either two or three clerks. Take the outside figure, and the sum expended on or for His Majesty amounts to ninety-five dollars in the month. Lieutenant Ulfsparre and Dr. Hagberg (the chief justice's Swedish friends) drew in the same period one hundred and forty and one hundred dollars respectively on account of salary alone. And it should be observed that Dr. Hagberg was employed, or at least paid, from government funds, in the face of His Majesty's express and reiterated protest. In another column of the statement, one hundred and seventy-five dollars and seventy-five cents are debited for the chief justice's travelling expenses. I am of the opinion that if His Majesty desired (or dared) to take an outing, he would be asked to bear the charge from his allowance. But although I think the chief justice had done more nobly to pay for himself, I am far from denying that his excursions were well meant; he should indeed be praised for having made them; and I leave the charge out of consideration in the following statement:

ON THE ONE HAND

Salary of Chief Justice Cedarkrantz.	$500
Salary of President Baron Senfft von Pilsach (about). .	415
Salary of Lieutenant Ulfsparre, Chief of Police . . .	140
Salary of Dr. Hagberg, Private Secretary to the Chief Justice.	100
Total monthly salary to four whites, one of them paid against His Majesty's protest	$1155

Digitized by Google

ON THE OTHER HAND

Total monthly payments to and for His Majesty the King, including allowance and hire of three clerks, one of these placed under the rubric of extraordinary expenses	$95

This looks strange enough and mean enough already. But we have ground of comparison in the practice of Brandeis.

Brandeis, white prime minister	$200
Tamasese (about)	160
White Chief of Police	100

Under Brandeis, in other words, the king received the second highest allowance on the sheet; and it was a good second, and the third was a bad third. And it must be borne in mind that Tamasese himself was pointed and laughed at among natives. Judge, then, what is muttered of Laupepa, housed in his shanty before the president's doors like Lazarus before the doors of Dives; receiving not so much of his own taxes as the private secretary of the law officer; and (in actual salary) little more than half as much as his own chief of police. It is known besides that he has protested in vain against the charge for Dr. Hagberg; it is known that he has himself applied for an advance and been refused. Money is certainly a grave subject on Mulinuu; but respect costs nothing, and thrifty officials might have judged it wise to make up in extra politeness for what they curtailed of pomp or comfort. One instance may suffice. Laupepa appeared

Digitized by Google

last summer on a public occasion; the president was there—and not even the president rose to greet the entrance of the sovereign. Since about the same period, besides, the monarch must be described as in a state of sequestration. A white man, an Irishman, the true type of all that is most gallant, humorous, and reckless in his country, chose to visit His Majesty and give him some excellent advice (to make up his difference with Mataafa) couched unhappily in vivid and figurative language. The adviser now sleeps in the Pacific, but the evil that he chanced to do lives after him. His Majesty was greatly (and I must say justly) offended by the freedom of the expressions used; he appealed to his white advisers; and these, whether from want of thought or by design, issued an ignominious proclamation. Intending visitors to the palace must appear before their consuls and justify their business. The majesty of buried Samoa was henceforth only to be viewed (like a private collection) under special permit; and was thus at once cut off from the company and opinions of the self-respecting. To retain any dignity in such an abject state would require a man of very different virtues from those claimed by the not unvirtuous Laupepa. He is not designed to ride the whirlwind or direct the storm, rather to be the ornament of private life. He is kind, gentle, patient as Job, conspicuously well intentioned, of charming manners; and when he pleases, he has one ac-

Digitized by Google

complishment in which he now begins to be alone —I mean that he can pronounce correctly his own beautiful language.

The government of Brandeis accomplished a good deal and was continually and heroically attempting more. The government of our two whites has confined itself almost wholly to paying and receiving salaries. They have built, indeed, a house for the president; they are believed (if that be a merit) to have bought the local newspaper with government funds; and their rule has been enlivened by a number of scandals, into which I feel with relief it is unnecessary I should enter. Even if the three powers do not remove these gentlemen, their absurd and disastrous government must perish by itself of inanition. Native taxes (except perhaps from Mataafa, true to his own private policy) have long been beyond hope. And only the other day (May 6, 1892), on the expressed ground that there was no guarantee as to how the funds would be expended, and that the president consistently refused to allow the verification of his cash balances, the municipal council has negatived the proposal to call up further taxes from the whites. All is well that ends even ill, so that it end; and we believe that with the last dollar we shall see the last of the last functionary. Now when it is so nearly over, we can afford to smile at this extraordinary passage, though we must still sigh over the occasion lost.

Digitized by Google

Malie. The way to Malie lies round the shores of Faleula bay and through a succession of pleasant groves and villages. The road, one of the works of Brandeis, is now cut up by pig fences. Eight times you must leap a barrier of cocoa posts; the take-off and the landing both in a patch of mire planted with big stones, and the stones sometimes reddened with the blood of horses that have gone before. To make these obstacles more annoying, you have sometimes to wait while a black boar clambers sedately over the so-called pig fence. Nothing can more thoroughly depict the worst side of the Samoan character than these useless barriers which deface their only road. It was one of the first orders issued by the government of Mulinuu after the coming of the chief justice, to have the passage cleared. It is the disgrace of Mataafa that the thing is not yet done.

The village of Malie is a scene of prosperity and peace. In a very good account of a visit there, published in the *Australasian*, the writer describes it to be fortified; she must have been deceived by the appearance of some pig walls on the shore. There is no fortification, no parade of war. I understand that from one to five hundred fighting men are always within reach; but I have never seen more than five together under arms, and these were the king's guard of honour. A Sabbath quiet broods over the well-weeded green, the picketed horses, the troops

Digitized by Google

of pigs, the round or oval native dwellings. Of these there are a surprising number, very fine of their sort: yet more are in the building; and in the midst a tall house of assembly, by far the greatest Samoan structure now in these islands, stands about half finished and already makes a figure in the landscape. No bustle is to be observed, but the work accomplished testifies to a still activity.

The centre-piece of all is the high chief himself, Malietoa-Tuiatua-Tuiaana Mataafa, king—or not king—or king-claimant—of Samoa. All goes to him, all comes from him. Native deputations bring him gifts and are feasted in return. White travellers, to their indescribable irritation, are (on his approach) waved from his path by his armed guards. He summons his dancers by the note of a bugle. He sits nightly at home before a semicircle of talking-men from many quarters of the islands, delivering and hearing those ornate and elegant orations in which the Samoan heart delights. About himself and all his surroundings there breathes a striking sense of order, tranquillity, and native plenty. He is of a tall and powerful person, sixty years of age, white-haired and with a white moustache; his eyes bright and quiet; his jaw perceptibly underhung, which gives him something of the expression of a benevolent mastiff; his manners dignified and a thought insinuating, with an air of a Catholic prelate. He was never married, and a

Digitized by Google

natural daughter attends upon his guests. Long since he made a vow of chastity,—"to live as our Lord lived on this earth,"—and Polynesians report with bated breath that he has kept it. On all such points, true to his Catholic training, he is inclined to be even rigid. Lauati, the pivot of Savaii, has recently repudiated his wife and taken a fairer; and when I was last in Malie, Mataafa (with a strange superiority to his own interests) had but just despatched a reprimand. In his immediate circle, in spite of the smoothness of his ways, he is said to be more respected than beloved; and his influence is the child rather of authority than popularity. No Samoan grandee now living need have attempted that which he has accomplished during the last twelve months with unimpaired prestige, not only to withhold his followers from war, but to send them to be judged in the camp of their enemies on Mulinuu. And it is a matter of debate whether such a triumph of authority were ever possible before. Speaking for myself, I have visited and dwelt in almost every seat of the Polynesian race, and have met but one man who gave me a stronger impression of character and parts.

About the situation, Mataafa expresses himself with unshaken peace. To the chief justice he refers with some bitterness; to Laupepa, with a smile, as "my poor brother." For himself, he stands upon the treaty, and expects sooner or later an election in which he shall be raised to

Digitized by Google

the chief power. In the meanwhile, or for an alternative, he would willingly embrace a compromise with Laupepa; to which he would probably add one condition, that the joint government should remain seated at Malie, a sensible but not inconvenient distance from white intrigues and white officials. One circumstance in my last interview particularly pleased me. The king's chief scribe, Esela, is an old employé under Tamasese, and the talk ran some while upon the character of Brandeis. Loyalty in this world is after all not thrown away; Brandeis was guilty, in Samoan eyes, of many irritating errors, but he stood true to Tamasese; in the course of time, a sense of this virtue and of his general uprightness has obliterated the memory of his mistakes; and it would have done his heart good if he could have heard his old scribe and his old adversary join in praising him. "Yes," concluded Mataafa, "I wish we had Planteisa back again." *A quelque chose malheur est bon.* So strong is the impression produced by the defects of Cedarkrantz and Baron Senfft, that I believe Mataafa far from singular in this opinion and that the return of the upright Brandeis might be even welcome to many.

I must add a last touch to the picture of Malie and the pretender's life. About four in the morning, the visitor in his house will be awakened by the note of a pipe, blown without, very softly and to a soothing melody. This is Mataafa's

Digitized by Google

private luxury to lead on pleasant dreams. We have a bird here in Samoa that about the same hour of darkness sings in the bush. The father of Mataafa, while he lived, was a great friend and protector to all living creatures and passed under the by-name of *the King of Birds*. It may be it was among the woodland clients of the sire that the son acquired his fancy for this morning music.

I have now sought to render without extenuation the impressions received: of dignity, plenty, and peace at Malie, of bankruptcy and distraction at Mulinuu. And I wish I might here bring to an end ungrateful labours. But I am sensible that there remain two points on which it would be improper to be silent. I should be blamed if I did not indicate a practical conclusion; and I should blame myself if I did not do a little justice to that tried company of the Land Commissioners.

The Land Commission has been in many senses unfortunate. The original German member, a gentleman of the name of Eggert, fell early into precarious health; his work was from the first interrupted, he was at last (to the regret of all that knew him) invalided home; and his successor has but just arrived. In like manner, the first American commissioner, Henry C. Ide, a man of character and intelligence, was recalled (I believe by private affairs) when he was but

Digitized by Google

just settling into the spirit of the work; and though his place was promptly filled by Ex-Governor Ormsbee, a worthy successor, distinguished by strong and vivacious common-sense, the break was again sensible. The English commissioner, my friend Bazett Michael Haggard, is thus the only one who has continued at his post since the beginning. And yet in spite of these unusual changes, the Commission has a record perhaps unrivalled among international commissions. It has been unanimous practically from the first until the last; and out of some four hundred cases disposed of, there is but one on which the members were divided. It was the more unfortunate they should have early fallen in a difficulty with the chief justice. The original ground of this is supposed to be a difference of opinion as to the import of the Berlin act, on which, as a layman, it would be unbecoming if I were to offer an opinion. But it must always seem as if the chief justice had suffered himself to be irritated beyond the bounds of discretion. It must always seem as if his original attempt to deprive the commissioners of the services of a secretary and the use of a safe were even senseless; and his step in printing and posting a proclamation denying their jurisdiction were equally impolitic and undignified. The dispute had a secondary result worse than itself. The gentleman appointed to be Natives' Advocate shared the chief justice's opinion, was his close intimate,

Digitized by Google

advised with him almost daily, and drifted at last into an attitude of opposition to his colleagues. He suffered himself besides (being a layman in law) to embrace the interest of his clients with something of the warmth of a partisan. Disagreeable scenes occurred in court; the advocate was more than once reproved, he was warned that his consultations with the judge of appeal tended to damage his own character and to lower the credit of the appellate court. Having lost some cases on which he set importance, it should seem that he spoke unwisely among natives. A sudden cry of colour prejudice went up; and Samoans were heard to assure each other that it was useless to appear before the Land Commission, which was sworn to support the whites.

This deplorable state of affairs was brought to an end by the departure from Samoa of the Natives' Advocate. He was succeeded *pro tempore* by a young New Zealander, E. W. Gurr, not much more versed in law than himself and very much less so in Samoan. Whether by more skill or better fortune, Gurr has been able in the course of a few weeks to recover for the natives several important tracts of land; and the prejudice against the Commission seems to be abating as fast as it arose. I should not omit to say that, in the eagerness of the original advocate, there was much that was amiable; nor must I fail to point out how much there was of

Digitized by Google

blindness. Fired by the ardour of pursuit, he seems to have regarded his immediate clients as the only natives extant and the epitome and emblem of the Samoan race. Thus, in the case that was the most exclaimed against as "an injustice to natives," his client, Puaauli, was certainly nonsuited. But in that intricate affair, who lost the money? The German firm. And who got the land? Other natives. To twist such a decision into evidence, either of a prejudice against Samoans or a partiality to whites, is to keep one eye shut and have the other bandaged.

And lastly, one word as to the future. Laupepa and Mataafa stand over against each other, rivals with no third competitor. They may be said to hold the great name of Malietoa in commission; each has borne the style, each exercised the authority, of a Samoan king; one is secure of the small but compact and fervent following of the Catholics, the other has the sympathies of a large part of the Protestant majority, and upon any sign of Catholic aggression would have more. With men so nearly balanced, it may be asked whether a prolonged successful exercise of power be possible for either. In the case of the feeble Laupepa, it is certainly not; we have the proof before us. Nor do I think we should judge, from what we see to-day, that it would be possible, or would continue to be possible, even for the kingly Mataafa, It is always the easier game to be

Digitized by Google

in opposition. The tale of David and Saul would infallibly be re-enacted; once more we shall have two kings in the land,—the latent and the patent; and the house of the first will become once more the resort of "every one that is in distress, and every one that is in debt, and every one that is discontented." Against such odds it is my fear that Mataafa might contend in vain; it is beyond the bounds of my imagination that Laupepa should contend at all. Foreign ships and bayonets is the cure proposed in Mulinuu. And certainly, if people at home desire that money should be thrown away and blood shed in Samoa, an effect of a kind, and for the time, may be produced. Its nature and prospective durability I will ask readers of this volume to forecast for themselves. There is one way to peace and unity: that Laupepa and Mataafa should be again conjoined on the best terms procurable. There may be other ways, although I cannot see them; but not even malevolence, not even stupidity, can deny that this is one. It seems, indeed, so obvious, and sure, and easy, that men look about with amazement and suspicion, seeking some hidden motive why it should not be adopted.

To Laupepa's opposition as shown in the case of the Lauati scheme, no dweller in Samoa will give weight, for they know him to be as putty in the hands of his advisers. It may be right, it may be wrong, but we are many of us driven to

Digitized by Google

the conclusion that the stumblin
galii, and that the memorial of t
ows appropriately the house o
reigns in right of it. If this be al
trouble us long. Germany has
be generous; it now remains for he
a natural but certainly ill-groun
and allow to him, who was sole
plenipotentiaries assembled, and
sole king to-morrow if the Berlin
scinded, a fitting share of rule.
Samoa should lie thus in the ha
man, on whom the eyes of Euro
fixed. Great concerns press on
the Samoan group, in his view, is
of dust; and the country where he
on too many august scenes of vict
ber for ever a blundering skirmis
tation of Vailele. It is to him—t
of the wise Stuebel and the loy
that I make my appeal.

May 25, 1892.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED

LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

11Oct'61K0	
REC'D LD	
SEP 28 1961	
[illegible]	
JUN 18 1971 1 3	
REC'D LD JUN 22 71 -1 PM 11	

LD 21A–50m-8,'61
(C1795s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

Digitized by Google